

Elite retweets, opinions and engagement: the use of Twitter by South African journalist Barry Bateman.

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I declare that this dissertation has not previously been submitted in part or whole for the award of any degree, and that it is my own work. Any substantial contributions to and quotations in the dissertation have been cited and referenced. The research uses the APA style of referencing.

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Abstract

This study examines how Twitter is used by South African journalist Barry Bateman to share news, report from events and communicate with his audience for two months (from 13 May to 13 July 2013). Content analysis and social network analysis are used to investigate the tweets, the responses he receives and discussions he is involved with on the social network site. While Bateman uses his Twitter account primarily to share the posts of other professional journalists and to promote his own work, organisation and colleagues, he also answers individual questions from users, going beyond the uni-directional model of journalism to engage in conversations and share resources. Bateman's use of Twitter also raises questions about how journalists negotiate the boundaries of the personal and professional on a medium where posting opinion is the norm, and how individuals with influence on the social network site can help 'the rich get richer' by highlighting other popular and powerful users.

Introduction

With the rise of the real time web and social network sites, information is shared in links, cell phone photos and 140 characters or less. From its early use in reporting the Hudson River plane crash to protests during the Arab Spring, Twitter is now used by both citizens and professional journalists to share news, opinions and real-time updates around the world. But is this new media platform being used by journalists to engage with audiences and foster discussions, or just for the one-way broadcasting of news and the amplification of the voice of the mainstream media? How do traditional ideas around non-partisanship and unbiased reporting play out on a social network site which lends itself to highly emotional responses and the sharing of personal opinion? Are journalists on Twitter simply helping already influential users gain even more attention by including them in their tweets? And how are journalists adapting or rejecting long standing practices on this new platform?

This study is built on the foundations of the work done by Singer (2005) on how journalists normalise blogging platforms to fit traditional values, and the subsequent research by Lasorsa et al. (2012) which studied 22 000 tweets by a selection of mainstream and alternative journalists to ascertain whether they were normalising the microblogging service in the same way. Using an adaptation on the method used by Lasorsa, et al. (2012) and later research by Artwick (2013), this study investigates the use of Twitter by South African journalist Barry Bateman by studying a sample of tweets collected over two months from 13 May to 13 July. Through content analysis of a sample of his tweets (N=386) and another sample of 2764 public tweets which included his username, it aims to provide some insight into how a prominent journalist is using the social network site, and how other Twitter users are connecting and engaging with him.

Literature review and theoretical framework

The media, lectures and power

Traditionally, the media has been a space tightly controlled by long-standing hierarchies: the flow of information was a top-down process influenced by editors and internal forces as much as it was by public relations practitioners and marketers on the outside (Gillmor, 2004). Reporters selected and produced stories, which were then altered and chosen for final publication by editors, along with a small section for user participation through genres such as 'letters to the editor', call-in discussions on radio shows, short polls and vox pops (Bruns, 2011). This sort of 'show and tell' for audiences did little to include the voices of people other than journalists in media texts (Bruns, 2011) or to involve audiences extensively in media production.

In addition to this, journalists have also historically included a disproportionately large number of statements from institutional elites (the groups and individuals which have power in society), from government officials to those involved in the business sector (Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, 2012). These institutional elites can have a great influence over public opinion, and their inclusion in news reports further establishes them as credible and powerful players in society (Hermida et al., 2012). Even the inclusion of the views of analysts and 'experts' in reports, which is designed to give viewers and readers context and informed commentary, is often influenced by their familiarity with the journalist and whether they support the overarching views of the media workers or organisation (Fourie, 2005). 'Big media', or the large, professional media companies which own popular radio, TV and print publications (and, more recently, online media), have created clearly defined lines between consumer and producer (Gillmor, 2004) and been accused of serving the commercial interests of media owners rather than the needs of the public (Fourie, 2005). The limited group of voices involved in shaping and producing the news, and the reliance on a small pool of sources, has led to the conceptualisation of journalism as more of a 'lecture' by those in power than open public dialogue (Artwick, 2013).

This level of involvement and representation in the media by those in authority also holds true in Africa. Mainstream media organisations on the continent can often be removed from the day-to-day lives of citizens (Nyamnjoh, 2011), propagating the views of those in power. Traditionally, South African media was involved in supporting the interests of owners who held stakes in the mining industry and used the newspapers they owned to secure a place of economic importance (Tomaselli, 1997). After the end of apartheid, the country's media landscape changed as new owners entered the space and newsrooms attempted to diversify their staff composition and appeal to a wider readership (Tomaselli, 1997). Despite this, the press still largely serves the interests of the minority. South African print media exhibit tendencies towards 'pack journalism' by relying on similar sources to their peers, particularly favouring those from well-resourced formal groups, institutions and the private sector which are easier to access and verify, thus impacting the range of voices which are

amplified through media reports (Duncan, 2012). Over the years, economic imperatives have also lead many mainstream broadsheets to largely present news at a more abstract level which caters to elite middle and upper classes and their perspective, rather than reporting on the lived experiences of those affected by topical issues such as HIV/AIDS and crime (Wasserman, 2008). This also applies in part to radio – for example, the public broadcaster (the SABC) has been criticised for not delivering content to some of the country's most marginalised audiences, while community radio stations often lack diversity in language use and widespread relevant and representative content (Duncan, 2003). More recently, tabloid newspapers in the country have found great success and have attempted to address the groups often neglected by the mainstream press, sharing the (often sensationalised) stories of the poor and working class and giving a voice to citizens and events which would not have been covered previously (Wasserman, 2009). But on the whole, mainstream journalism in post-apartheid South Africa has a history of reporting for upper socio-economic classes (Wasserman & de Beer, 2005), rather than grassroots involvement with and representation of communities on every level.

The web and the public sphere

The tendency for the mainstream media to amplify a selected group of voices plays into discussions around its role in the public sphere. Conventional views of the public sphere present a space where citizens can actively contribute and discuss ideas and issues for the continued growth of society (McCluskey & Hmielowski, 2011). The growth of the internet and the rise in worldwide connectivity has brought with it hopes that the web could level long-standing hierarchies and facilitate truly democratic discussions among all segments of society (Lasorsa et al., 2012), serving as a platform for what Habermas (1989) termed a deliberative public sphere. The way the internet connects spatially distant users with one another and allows them to debate ideas and express individual concerns – as well as raise ideas as a community – has led to some conceptualising the web as an important extension of the public sphere (Ruizl et al., 2011). This perspective posits a virtual community, which does not necessarily exist in any identifiable physical space, but which ideally participates in open discussion which fosters rational debate, tolerance and the articulation of a public opinion (Kanyegirire, 2006; Ruizl et al., 2011).

But, despite the potential the web offers for wide scale deliberation, factors such as unequal levels of access and literacy, high data costs, lack of infrastructure and audience fragmentation have limited its potential (Bosch, 2010). In South Africa, 19% of internet users live below the poverty line and more than half first accessed the web on mobile phones as only 24% have a computer and a fifth have internet access at home (de Lanerolle, 2012). While the majority have attended high school, only 18% speak English at home (de Lanerolle, 2012), limiting the scale of widespread potential participation in online discussions when factors such as data and access to resources are a major barrier and the media produce the majority of their content in English. But these are not the only

limitations. While the interactivity afforded by the web could assist in encouraging deliberation, commercial pressures still impact the independence of media and its ability to reflect a representative view of society (Fourie, 2005). This is further complicated in South Africa because any semblance of a unified participatory public sphere was impossible under apartheid rule, when even potential common unifiers such as language and culture were highly politicised (Tomaselli, 1997). Today, 'the public' is constituted of a diverse mix of citizens divided on grounds ranging from race and ethnicity to class (Wasserman & de Beer, 2005). This optimistic view is also mitigated because audiences – particularly African ones – can use computer technologies in unpredictable ways (Nyamnjoh, 2011). Western theories about media and the public may also not be compatible with African values such as *ubuntu*, which privilege community before individualism and can provide a different framework for sharing and participation in public life (Fourie, 2005).

On the whole, the widespread change envisioned by technological determinists who implied the web would 'revolutionise' the media has not occurred, as the long standing 'we speak, you listen' model largely continues to this day, albeit on a different platform (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

Journalism in the new media age

These broad continuities do not mean that the shift to producing online content has left the daily practices of journalists unchanged. New media platforms – those which allow for the use of digital technologies to create and disseminate news and information – offer journalists a number of additional tools for storytelling, from interactive data visualisations to hypertext links and multimedia packages (Bosch, 2010; Lasorsa et al., 2012). There has also been an increase in the volume of computer-assisted reporting, as journalists use the web for both researching and publishing their work (Deuze, 2003).

Increasing levels of internet adoption worldwide have forced many previously print or broadcast-only organisations to transition to produce online media – either in addition to their existing publication, or as a standalone product (Robinson, 2010). In South Africa, the former is more prevalent, as online journalism is often seen as a supplement to existing offline efforts (Bosch, 2010). In the country, the websites of print media are typically used as a vehicle for sharing 'shovelware', or content transferred from an offline medium with little alteration, although some publications are increasingly focusing on web-first and web-only content (Bosch, 2010). Print publications were largely left "playing catch-up", following international shifts towards including features such as blogs, multimedia and interactive elements on news websites (Wasserman, 2008, p. 787), and have generally been hesitant in their adoption of more advanced digital tools for storytelling (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). This, coupled with unproven digital business models and the lack of resources and funds needed to train staff, pay for bandwidth and produce high quality digital projects, has made the transition to online media a story of caution and uncertainty (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). The digital content produced by local media is largely in English (Bosch, 2010), and caters for a

small portion of the country's total populace, as just over 20% of the population has access to the internet (World Wide Worx, 2012). In most cases, those with constant, reliable internet access tend to be members of the urban middle class (Paterson, 2013), with members of lower socio-economic classes largely excluded from online discussions by barriers such as data and technology costs (Jones & Pitcher, 2010).

But providing news and information for internet users is becoming more of a priority as the level of penetration is increasing quickly, with the South African internet user base growing 25% between 2010 and the end of 2011 (World Wide Worx, 2012). Mobile connections in the country now outnumber fixed line subscriptions eight to one, with an estimated 7.9 million of its 8.5 million internet users accessing the web using a mobile device (World Wide Worx, 2012). This drive towards higher mobile connectivity is expected to continue, with market analysts predicting more smartphones will be sold in South African in 2013 than feature phones (World Wide Worx, 2012), offering another (cheaper) way for people to access the web. The affinity for resource sharing and interdependence in African communities may mean that even those who do not own internet-enabled phones or computers directly may have access to a shared device (Nyamnjoh, 2005). But while the majority of citizens may not be frequently and actively involved with new information and communication technologies (ICTs), these new technologies still have an impact on communication and information sharing (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

Normalising new media

News organisations have often been slow and reluctant to adopt new platforms (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012), and the transition to online media has been no different. Many journalists are now producing content for an interactive space which increasingly allows for an entirely different relationship with readers and audiences – namely, a relationship which changes daily journalistic practices and which can reduce the level of authority they hold (Gillmor, 2004; Robinson, 2010).

In liberal democratic societies, journalists are presumed to be impartial observers who put great emphasis on values such as fairness, objectivity and balance, and produce content which seeks to educate or entertain those who consume it (Nyamnjoh, 2011). While new media platforms have created new challenges and opportunities, they have also been subject to a process of normalisation, as journalists attempt to transfer these values and long standing traditions on to the new medium (Hermida et al., 2012). This has led to the web becoming what Lasorsa et al. (2012, p. 21) refer to as a “new site for old activities.”

Active audiences and gatewatching

The web is increasingly becoming a platform for the active production of user-generated content, creating a more democratic, participant-constructed space than existed in the early days of the web (O'Reilly, 2005). Audiences have the ability to add additional content to the work of journalists (Robinson, 2010) and contribute to news in real time (Papacharissi & de

Fatima Oliveira, 2012) from a location or event that 'professional' news teams may not have visited (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2010). This trend is likely to become even more pronounced with the rapid adoption of mobile computing devices such as smartphones and tablets (Hansen et al., 2010). Never before has it been so easy for a person, with just an internet connection and some time, to publish her own content, create a following online, share her ideas and potentially reach millions (Welch, 2003).

Along the way, these 'amateur journalists' are learning and adapting the techniques of their professional counterparts, and becoming more informed critics and commentators (Welch, 2003). The rise of the citizen journalist – a person who can provide analysis or on-the-ground coverage of an event without the need for formal training or an affiliation with or resources of an official media organisation – is forcing journalists to realise that their traditions need to change, as audiences are not just active consumers of news, but producers as well (Bosch, 2010; Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). The web is enabling citizens to produce their own content and air their views on platforms such as blogs, which are free from the agendas set by mass media (Jones, 2011). This more active role for audiences offers an opportunity for hierarchies to be disrupted as the line between producer and consumer becomes blurred (Hermida et al., 2012).

These developments are making the media of today more of an evolving dialogue than a one-directional message (Deuze, 2003). This impacts the gatekeeping role of journalists – a core role of the profession, designed to ensure factual reporting by excluding or including information as they see fit in order to control the messages disseminated (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Singer, 2005). With the almost unlimited, frequently updated sources of information the web provides, exercising any level of control over publically available information is near impossible, which reduces the level of authority any one news organisation can hold over communication in the public sphere (Singer, 2005). Newsmakers can release information on their own websites or blogs, minimising (or completely removing) any reliance on the traditional media to communicate with the public (Gillmor, 2004). Instead of being shepherded along regulated channels, information is able to bypass old barriers, facilitated by the real time communication tools available to anyone with access to the web or a mobile device (Gillmor, 2004). Public discussions increasingly take place on blogs or through mobile applications, as citizens debate issues in spaces distant from traditional broadcasters or print media (Paterson, 2013).

Still, many journalists attempt to maintain the vertical channels of communication long established by print and broadcast media, rather than fostering horizontal discussions in which they are a collaborator with their audiences (Singer, 2005). They still choose which stories to cover and how prominent a place to give them on mobile and desktop websites (Jones, 2011) and they may provide and encourage audiences to use interactive facilities such as comments sections and forums, but these often become more of a place for readers

to discuss issues amongst themselves rather than with journalists (Gillmor, 2004; Robinson, 2010).

Journalists are still involved with 'gates', but in a different way. They increasingly focus on deciding what is reliable, accurate and valuable news, arguing that the *ability* to self-publish does not automatically make one a journalist (Singer, 2005). Many mainstream outlets have retained their authoritative roles by providing audiences with news, alternative angles and in-depth analysis which they claim is a verified and more valuable alternative to amateur productions that may not go through the same level of vetting and elicit the same relationship of trust with audiences (Singer, 2005). In a space where information is shared so quickly, journalists have shifted from being the first to break news to being the best at curating and verifying information (Newman, 2009) and focusing on helping others understand events through added context and identifying the most important, interesting and relevant insights (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). Instead of the process of 'filtering' (editing) news before publishing, online journalism has increasingly become a system of publish first, filter later (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). But the shortening of the news cycle and need for quick commentary on the real time web may also have increased journalists' reliance on reports from other news organisations and sources which are known to the journalist and easy to access – thus further increasing the volume of sources in media texts which hold existing positions of authority (Hermida et al., 2012).

The increase in the number of platforms for distributing news and commentary and the rise of collaborative processes for producing that content means that gatekeeping is making way for gatewatching – the practice of keeping track of the information passing through media channels (Bruns, 2011). Journalists have become focused on aggregating posts by others or highlighting some of the most noteworthy blogs, thought leaders and reader comments, thereby lending their support to some sources and ideas but not others and continuing to attempt to manage and interpret information for audiences (Gillmor, 2004; Jordaan, 2013; Paterson, 2013).

Accountability and transparency

With the increase in access to resources and ability to self-publish the web has provided, many journalistic practices have been demystified and audiences have become increasingly willing to question the authenticity of reports (Singer, 2005; Welch, 2003). The web has made it easier to find information, scrutinise the work of the media and spread the findings rapidly (Gillmor, 2004). The ability to hyperlink has become a form of referencing, as journalists are required to explain where they found their information and give audiences the option to analyse the reliability of their sources (Singer, 2005). Some readers even suggest alternative sources of information or correct journalists' mistakes though interactive features such as commenting sections (Robinson, 2010) holding media organisations to new levels of accountability and transparency.

Studies have found that even when using new media platforms such as blogs, journalists tend to give preference to existing mainstream news sources when substantiating their argument, linking to the reports of their home news organisation or another major publisher more often than not (Singer, 2005). This reinforces previous research which suggests that journalists tend to privilege sources which hold positions of power in society – so-called elite or mainstream media and people (Hermida et al., 2012).

Non-partisan views on personal platforms

Striving for objectivity and fairness in reporting has long been seen as a practice of critical importance for journalists (Gillmor, 2004). But, given the difficulty of removing opinions completely from any report, the focus has shifted to promoting non-partisanship as one of the main normative standards in journalism instead, along with related notions of balance and accuracy (Singer, 2005). But many new media platforms (for instance, blogs and microblogs) have become spaces for sharing deeply personal and highly opinionated thoughts, making it difficult for journalists to always maintain the sense of distance and non-partisanship traditionally called for by the profession (Singer, 2005).

Early studies of the blogs written by journalists found that their creators did occasionally include their own opinions in posts. This was usually done by columnists who were accustomed to sharing their thoughts in the organisation's offline counterpart (Singer, 2005). Thus the new medium was institutionalised, becoming just another platform for existing practices, instead of allowing it to alter the way they produced news and commentary (Singer, 2005).

While journalists have adopted many participatory new media platforms as part of their work, the nature of the messages shared has remained largely unchanged (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Essentially, many journalists are now using new platforms and technologies while focusing on the same values that guided them before (Newman, 2009). As Newman (Newman, 2009, p. 39) puts it, "so far at least, the use of new tools has not led to any fundamental rewrite of the rule book – just a few tweaks round the edges."

While previous research has suggested that new media forms such as blogs (Singer, 2005) and websites (Robinson, 2010) have largely been moulded to fit existing practices, the use of social network sites adds another element to the discussion. Are these new media platforms also simply new tools, or are they fundamentally changing what journalists do?

Social networks and social network sites

boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 211) broadly define social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." In

recent years, these social network sites have made social networks – a collection of people and their relations to one another – more visible (Hansen et al., 2010).

Social networks are formed when individuals interact with others, whether it be mediated or through direct face-to-face communication (Hansen et al., 2010). The basic structure of a social network can be broken down into individuals ('nodes' or 'vertices') who are connected by relationships ('edges' or 'ties'), which can be represented graphically to identify the structure and shape of the larger network (Hansen et al., 2010). The nature and direction of ties can vary greatly, as some nodes may be connected by many reciprocal ties such as friendship, a shared work group and information sharing and form part of a larger multiplex network which represents the different types of ties between them (Hansen et al., 2010). Meanwhile, other nodes may simply be linked through occasional contact – in this case, the connection can be referred to as a 'weak tie' (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 1999).

Social networks have been a focus of study for decades, but the recent rise in social network sites has both provided new sets of connections to study and made it easier for researchers to investigate them using computer-aided techniques (Hansen et al., 2010). Although social network sites are primarily designed to facilitate online connections between people through actions such as 'friending' or 'following' and conversational elements, they often also include a broadcast element which allows users to share content such as photos and videos on a potentially large scale (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). While social networking (forming new relationships) is possible using these sites, it is not always the primary reason for joining, as users often wish to 'friend' or follow existing connections rather than actively seek out new ones (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Many sites allow for networking as well as some publishing element, as users are given the opportunity to upload and share their own content (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). These network sites may target general or niche audiences and interests, and include varying levels of support for the sharing of video, photos and text (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Social network sites offer both a way for existing relationships to be maintained and for new relationships between people to originate, as they allow for users to contact people who they may not know well offline – or at all (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Garton et al., 1999). In this way, they have helped support the growth and maintenance of entirely virtual communities (Garton et al., 1999) which link people who may never have interacted with each other were it not for the social network site. These computer-mediated networks can also facilitate interaction in previously unconnected networks as well as between people who are distant acquaintances, strengthening previously weak ties between users or solidifying latent ties that already exist offline (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Garton et al., 1999).

While social networks have long been a channel allowing for the spread of resources to different people and groups, online communication has greatly facilitated the rapid sharing of information (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). While resources were previously primarily shared

between people who maintained strong ties with one another, computer-mediated communication and the lowered barrier to making contact has allowed information to be shared even between people who are linked by weak ties (Garton et al., 1999). Social network sites have continued this trend, as they are platforms which allow their users to communicate with one another and exchange images, video and other media texts. The proliferation of these sites (and their mobile applications) may allow for a greater number of citizens to participate in a digital public sphere (Bosch, 2010).

Some social network sites, such as microblogging service Twitter, combine both networking and media sharing elements as they allow users to broadcast content *to* and *through* a network, allowing for the spread of the information (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). In the case of Twitter, information flows through the network to the user's direct social network, then into an expanded network and, in some cases, even to strangers who may be completely unconnected to the original user (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). It is this potential for sharing a message to a potentially vast global audience that has seen the service playing an increasingly large role in spreading information online, and which makes it an interesting social network site to consider in the context of widescale public discussions.

Twitter

Developed as a mobile messaging service to send short 140-character messages ("tweets"), Twitter has become one of the world's most popular free social network sites with more than 200 million monthly active users globally (Twitter, 2012a). Founded in 2006 by Evan Williams, Jack Dorsey and Christopher 'Biz' Stone, the service is a "conversational microblog" (Barash & Golder, 2010, p. 144) which allows users to subscribe to (or "follow") the tweets of others without requiring a reciprocal acceptance of the connection on behalf of the followed party – unless the account is set to private, which is not enabled by default (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010).

The tweets from followed users appear as a chronological stream in user's home pages, and they are able to repost ("retweet") them to their own followers by either selecting a dedicated retweet button or adding in "RT" in front of the account's username. By studying the usernames mentioned after the RT, it is often possible to track the original source of a message, as long as the owners of subsequent accounts were included as the message passed along. This is not an exact process; longer chains of RT attributions can leave no space for the initial message, so they may be abbreviated, with portions of the original tweet and retweeting users left out (Barash & Golder, 2010).

Twitter users can also tag other users in tweets by including the '@' symbol in front of a user's name (e.g. @CNN). If they choose to begin a tweet with "@username", then only those followers who are also following the user they are replying to will see the tweet. This is known as a 'reply'. It is distinct from a 'mention' in that the username appears at the start of the tweet as a direct response, as opposed to simply placing the username later on in the

message (Barash & Golder, 2010). Another popular function on Twitter is the hashtag, which has been called a “user-generated collaborative argument on what is news” (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012, p. 268). Hashtags are keywords which include a ‘#’ symbol prefix. These allow users to tag their tweets with relevant conversational markers to add their message to a larger body of tweets, which can then be more easily located by searching for or clicking on the hashtag. These hashtags are created almost instantly after notable news breaks and become more visible as Twitter promotes terms which are included in a large volume of messages as ‘trending topics’, which appear as clickable links on user’s home page on the web and under the ‘discover’ tab in the mobile apps (Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Yardi & boyd, 2010). Tweets can include text, photos, location tags, short 6 second long videos (through Twitter Inc’s application Vine), and hyperlinks to URLs for videos or other content on the web.

Although Twitter was founded in 2006, it first started gaining popularity when used by early adopters at the South by South West technology and music festival in 2007 (Williams, 2011) and went mainstream in the U.S. after notable celebrities such as television personality Oprah Winfrey and actor Ashton Kutcher began using the service in 2009 (Barash & Golder, 2010). Twitter users are generally still younger early adopters – in the United States, more than half of adults who posted news on Twitter were under the age of 30 (Mitchell & Hitlin, 2013).

While not as popular as other social network sites such as Facebook – which has 1.15 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2013) – Twitter has seen growing adoption rates in a number of markets. It is the twelfth most popular website in South Africa, with recent market research estimating there are 2.43 million Twitter users in the country (Alexa, 2013; World Wide Worx & Fuseware, 2012). The service is not as widely used as local mobile messaging and social networking portal Mxit (which has more than 6.5 million monthly active users in the country), but it is gaining more than 100 000 new users a month, who send up to 9.6 million tweets a day (Pieters, 2013; World Wide Worx & Fuseware, 2012). Twitter’s user base in the country is predominantly urban, with more than double the amount of urban than rural users, although rural use is increasing (World Wide Worx & Fuseware, 2012). Despite this rapid growth, the fact remains that a very small percentage of the country’s 51 million citizens use Twitter, and the social network site’s user base skews towards the more affluent classes and those groups who already have their views represented on other media platforms (Friedman, 2013).

The service’s mobile applications and website are used to share everything from news to personal updates and to conduct general discussions (Lasorsa et al., 2012). The types of conversations held can differ greatly. Although searching for results including a public hashtag can expose users to vastly differing viewpoints than offered by the users they are following, they are limited in their ability to partake in meaningful discussions as the swiftness of conversations on the service and the 140 character limit makes any form of

deliberative democratic conversation difficult (Yardi & boyd, 2010). Instead, the platform privileges speed and emotion-fuelled replies (Yardi & boyd, 2010). These short bursts of information are largely publically available and searchable (Hermida, 2010), owing to Twitter's default 'public' setting.

Twitter has also been adopted at a large scale by brands and news organisations as a tool to promote their products and engage with customers and audiences. Many news organisations hold accounts on the platform, which they promote on their websites and offline channels. In this way, Twitter has shifted from a tool used to share thoughts and day-to-day events to one used for journalistic activities (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). It has also become a useful service for individual journalists, both for the distribution of media content, and as a news gathering and reporting tool in itself (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010).

The rise of Twitter journalism

As social network sites have proliferated, Twitter has become a leader in providing real-time news to its millions of users, who follow others both for the purpose of information and social networking (Kwak et al., 2010). The real time nature of the service allows for users to discover, contribute and share news and quickly harvest information sometimes just seconds after it has been shared (Vieweg, Hughes, Starbird, & Palen, 2010). It initially gained popularity for news and reporting when it was used to spread information by both professional journalists and casual users during major events such as the presidential election in the United States in 2008, when a US Airlines plane crashed into the Hudson River in 2009 (Kwak et al., 2010) and the 2008 Mumbai attacks (Posetti, 2009). It has continued to gain attention from journalists after it was used extensively by protesters, citizen reporters and the mainstream media during the more recent political revolutions in North Africa, first in Tunisia and then Egypt (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

The always-on nature of Twitter has led to the service being conceptualised as a platform for 'ambient journalism' (Bruns & Burgess, 2012), where news and communication have become a collective, omnipresent effort involving journalists and their audiences (Hermida, 2010; Lasorsa et al., 2012). Although a Twitter user may not be intending to follow news updates – and the general-day-to-day use of the site may not involve much official news content – there will come a point when enough users are tweeting about a topic that s/he will be made consciously aware of it (Bruns & Burgess, 2012).

The service's trending topics often highlight breaking news stories, from natural disasters to celebrity deaths. Some studies suggest as many as 85% of the trending discussions are headline news or news-related (Kwak et al., 2010). Thus the platform has become a social network site with a constant stream of ambient information (Bruns & Burgess, 2012), which is playing an increasingly prominent role in the dissemination of information online. The level of social awareness on Twitter blurs the boundaries between news and entertainment, and gives users and journalists the opportunity for different levels of engagement – whether

it be direct responses or just observation (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). In practice, the site is used in very different ways by news organisations and individual journalists around the world.

How journalists use Twitter

While the medium used by journalists may be changing, it does not make the work they are doing any less journalistic, as they are still sharing information with others and helping make sense of events (Jones, 2011). Twitter has been adopted as a sharing and conversation tool by professional reporters, citizen journalists and general users alike, who use it for everything from live reporting of breaking events to the discussion of those events as they unfold (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). Information spreads through the network incredibly rapidly, as news can transcend existing followed-follower relationships through publically available hashtags and searchable trending topics (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). Many news organisations, including popular South African print titles such as the *Mail and Guardian* and *Rapport*, now actively encourage their employees to open accounts on the platform, and the service is used by journalists to promote their work, follow the latest news, and communicate with audiences and sources (Jordaan, 2013; Lasorsa et al., 2012). The ease with which media can be shared on the platform, particularly from internet-enabled smartphones, has also resulted in an increasing amount of user generated photos and videos being incorporated in traditional media reports (Bruns & Burgess, 2012).

The rapid, concise and easily shared nature of tweets has also driven the adoption of ‘live-tweeting’, or live reporting of a news event as it happens. Journalists and citizen journalists have used Twitter as a tool to share up-to-the-minute updates from important events (Bruns & Burgess, 2012), from its early use in the Hudson River plane crash to the more recent hunt for the Boston bombing suspects. In the latter case, users of Twitter and social news aggregator Reddit live-tweeted and posted what was heard over the police scanner as officers were in pursuit of the suspects who detonated two bombs near the finish line of the 2013 Boston Marathon (Madrigal, 2013), often beating mainstream news organisations in the speed of their reporting. However, this type of live-tweeting can also lead to the rapid spread of errors and unverified information along with factual on-the-ground updates – as happened in this case.

The ability for Twitter (and related social network sites such as Facebook and YouTube) to change how breaking news is reported has led to the concept of the ‘Twitter effect’ – an attempt to describe how communication is changing thanks to real time, user-generated content (Bruno, 2011). While Twitter can prove to be a great asset for providing on-the-ground information when traditional sources aren’t available, some early research suggests that mainstream news organisations may only use it for that reason – once their own reporters are on the scene, many return to relying on sources ranging from local press outlets to charitable organisations and other institutional elites (Bruno, 2011).

For its part, Twitter has been quite actively involved in trying to affirm its place as a disseminator of real time news by encouraging more journalists to use its site as part of their work. It has put together a best practice guide based on annual research into popular journalists and news organisations, along with a dedicated ‘Twitter for newsrooms’ section on its site and an official account (@TwitterForNews) which highlights innovative ways journalists have used Twitter. Its own research suggests that journalists should use hashtags to add context to their tweets, cite their sources through mentioning their Twitter usernames, and focus on sharing frequent updates related to their specific beat through techniques such as live-tweeting (Twitter, 2012b). Twitter also suggests journalists and their organisations can get more responses to their tweets (through retweets and replies) by including elements such as URLs and hashtags and can grow their following by sharing URLs which don’t link to content from their own organisation (Twitter, 2012b).

Twitter and journalism in South Africa

In South Africa, the use of Twitter by local news organisations varies greatly. While most major publications do hold active accounts on the service, some are little more than automated posts from their websites while others are used to share photos, videos and updates from breaking news stories (or, at least to retweet the posts by their journalists on the ground). Some organisations, such as weekly newspaper the *Mail and Guardian* and Primedia broadcast news portal *Eyewitness News*, have dedicated accounts used for live reporting from major events, and promote these alongside the official Twitter accounts on their websites as an additional option for audiences. Some of the most influential Twitter accounts held by South African news organisations include the country’s biggest news website, *News24* (which has more than 423 000 followers), *Mail and Guardian* (130 000 followers), *Eyewitness News* (99 000 followers), Independent Media Groups’ *Independent Online* (68 000 followers), Primedia’s *Talk Radio 702* (85 000 followers) and the independently owned *Daily Maverick* (58 000 followers) (World Wide Worx & Fuseware, 2012).

A number of individual journalists have also adopted the medium and post regularly as part of their work. Some preliminary research into the Twitter network of South African journalists suggest that reporters and commentators are likely to follow their peers who are employed by the same larger media house and who are active in smaller interest areas such as news, sport and technology (Verweij, 2012). Editors and reporters at prominent organisations such as the *Mail and Guardian*, weekly newspaper *City Press* and *Eyewitness News* also hold the most authority in the network, as they are the most followed by other journalists (Verweij, 2012). Although South African newspapers such as the *Mail and Guardian* and Afrikaans-language daily *Rapport* encourage their journalists to use social media, a small portion of their employees don’t hold accounts on social network sites such as Twitter and don’t “see the point” of using them besides for promoting their work (Jordaan, 2013, p. 29). At other publications, journalists have used tips from Facebook as a

starting point for major investigative reporting and asked their followers on Twitter for help identifying and contacting sources (Stassen, 2011; Trench, 2011). Increasingly, journalists in the country are starting to accept that using new media platforms and social network sites to gather information and research leads is not 'the future' of journalism but practices which need to be adopted in the present to avoid being "left in the dust" (Trench, 2011, p. 19).

On the whole, while news organisations and their employees are increasingly posting to accounts on the social network site, the way they use them is very mixed (Artwick, 2013). The potential that Twitter offers citizens to actively participate in discussions around news and media reports and engage with journalists has played a part in the conceptualisation of journalism as becoming more involved with offering a service than selling a product (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2010). This would involve journalists sharing resources and information with citizens and answering their questions in a reciprocal manner, essentially moving away from the traditional 'lecture' model and flattening the hierarchies which control the flow of information (Artwick, 2013). This could dissolve the barriers between journalists and media consumers at a time where such divisions can be detrimental to news organisations with an audience who expects to be able to respond (Posetti, 2009). But at this stage, research into the practice suggests that many use the platform to broadcast messages to their audiences, rather than diverting from traditional practice to focus instead on fostering public dialogue (Artwick, 2013).

Journalistic norms on Twitter

While Twitter does offer journalists and media organisations the ability to leverage the medium to interact with audiences on the platform, it is still primarily used for one-way sharing of news – essentially becoming a new site for old broadcast activities (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). Even though the platform can be (and is) used to crowdsource both news and potential sources (Posetti, 2009), journalists' tweets are generally built upon the news values and practices held by their respective organisations, with mixed attitudes displayed towards Twitter as a medium for reporting (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Recent studies suggest that, even on their personal accounts, journalists still tend to adhere to traditional journalistic practices and norms, predominantly sharing content from established news media, although with an occasional dose of opinion (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Many simply see Twitter as a means to market their work on other platforms (e.g. by linking to an article on their website or reminding viewers to listen to their radio show) and not as a medium in itself (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). Because of this, the Twitter feeds of most news organisations are little more than a place for republishing broadcast and print stories, or automatically generated headlines pulled from the RSS feed of their websites (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

The features of the social network site may inherently allow for the same type of top-down methods of communication long used by mainstream media. With its non-reciprocal

followed/follower relationships, Twitter supports the rapid sharing of information, particularly from prominent users to less prominent ones, allowing for both one-to-many and many-to-many sharing to take place (Hermida, 2010). It makes it possible for attention to flow asymmetrically, as a user can have millions of followers without having to pay attention to them in return, in a similar way to mass media forms such as print and radio (Barash & Golder, 2010). Streams of information and attention can flow in different directions, as one user looks to another to share information with him/her, and not necessarily vice versa (Barash & Golder, 2010). The low level of reciprocal relationships between followers and the followed user suggests that Twitter is more of a source of information than an equal social network site, as users are not bound to following a follower back (Hermida, 2010; Kwak et al., 2010).

The follower count, along with the ability for prominent accounts to receive a 'verified account' status (demonstrated by a blue badge on the user's profile) also serves to distinguish authoritative and popular users from less 'official' accounts (Bruns & Burgess, 2012). This has contributed to an unequal distribution of influence, as popular news organisations and journalists tend to get more followers than less well known ones – a situation whereby the 'rich get richer' (Lasorsa et al., 2012). The accounts which have the most followers (upwards of 10 million) either belong to a celebrity, major brand or media organisation, and their followers vastly outnumber the number of accounts they are following (Kwak et al., 2010; Socialbakers, 2013). In this sense, Twitter is very similar to mainstream broadcast media – messages are often sent from one to many, and the public is largely expected to 'receive' information (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012; Schultz & Sheffer, 2010).

Accountability and transparency in real time

The speed of the medium and the tendency for conversations and information to be mixed interchangeably in one rapidly updating stream highlights one of the other characteristics of Twitter: the potential to spread rumours or unverified information as fact (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). While many journalists continue to follow the rule of 'verify first, publish later' (Mare, 2013), others are starting to publish first (sometimes with an accompanying disclaimer) and simply apologise if user-generated content is later found to be faked or incorrect (Bruno, 2011). The speed of updates on the social network site during breaking news periods does not often allow for established practices such as fact checking if the instantaneous news values which demand live-tweeting are to be met (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Journalists have found it difficult to prove the validity of their information (Lasorsa et al., 2012), often with dire consequences. For example, during the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombings, casual users and journalists alike were found to be retweeting and sharing information that was inaccurate, even going so far as to identify a suspect who was innocent (Madrigal, 2013). While it is possible to capture screen shots of tweets or use the manual RT function to preserve these posts, users can often avoid

major repercussions by quickly deleting a tweet, as was the case with the journalists in this example. This makes accountability an issue, when journalists aren't compelled to comment or respond to allegations that they spread false reports.

But journalists can use Twitter to promote transparency in a similar way to blogs, by posting hyperlinks to sources of information or mentioning a Twitter user as a form of attribution (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Social network sites could, theoretically, provide journalists with a greater number and variety of sources, thus providing an opportunity for alternative voices to shape the news (Hermida et al., 2012). Users can also challenge a journalist who posts incorrect information – but the nature of the one-way medium means they have no obligation to reply, and often the volume of responses can make it difficult to identify a single query in a stream of other mentions for popular users. However, some journalists do demystify their work by posting updates from inside the newsroom, sharing the stories behind the scenes and providing context and evidence of their personal life – although Lasorsa et al.'s (2012) research suggests this is more likely to be a practice followed by journalists from smaller media outlets than mainstream media organisations.

Gatewatching and active audiences

On Twitter, the speed of updates can often outstrip the traditional press, as eyewitness accounts are shared on the platform before journalists can produce complete reports on the situation (Bosch, 2010; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). This is specifically noticeable in the live-tweets about natural disasters, riots, and major international events, be they related to sport, entertainment or politics, which makes it possible for users to bypass gatekeepers and difficult for journalists to be the first sources reporting on a story (Hermida, 2010; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). In this way, Twitter allows users to send and receive information from sources which may not be the same as those preferred by journalists (Hermida et al., 2012).

Just as other new media platforms such as blogs have eroded journalists' authority over the news, Twitter has allowed citizens to take part in "the observation, selection, filtering, distribution and interpretation of events" (Hermida, 2010, p. 220). The audience is often actively involved in deciding what is newsworthy in the first place (Lasorsa et al., 2012). While the platform can be used for one-to-many sharing, users can also horizontally spread, discuss and create the news among themselves (Hermida, 2010). They share everything from hyperlinks to reposts of interesting news to up-to-the-minute text, photographs and video clips (Lasorsa et al., 2012), making discussions about the news more visible (Bruns, 2011). Some journalists have embraced this discussion, in effect sharing their tweets with others through retweeting their messages, although retweets often feature less often in journalists' timelines than do the tweets they composed themselves (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Through retweets, journalists are able to both assist with curating and spreading information, as well as sharing the voices of others (Bruns, 2011), thus fulfilling the gatewatching function.

In addition to this, journalists have attempted to harness discussion on the platform for their own reports by including the conversation into stories on major trending topics (Bruns & Burgess, 2012), phrased as elements such as 'What Twitter thinks' and 'Twitter reacts'. In this way, gatewatching is practiced and a level of control exerted as the responsibility of selecting, evaluating and publishing the content is given to journalists (Hermida et al., 2012; Mitchell & Hitlin, 2013). The inclusion of this information in reports may be further complicated by the fact that the opinions expressed on Twitter do not accurately represent the overall public opinion on a topic (Mitchell & Hitlin, 2013), and citizen reports on the platform can often simply mirror mainstream reporting, thus limiting the number of alternative viewpoints and sources (Hermida et al., 2012). However, Hermida et al. (2012) suggest that some journalists do retweet and use information provided by non-mainstream media sources, particularly when there is limited information available through traditional sources (such as during the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions). The use of Twitter for identifying citizen voices on the ground requires journalists to verify legitimate users and attempt to authenticate the text, images and videos posted, which can be difficult in situations where there is a scarcity of additional information for fact-checking (Bruno, 2011).

The amount of influence these journalists can hold on the platform is also a factor which must be considered. Some research suggests that influential figures tend to form a tighter cluster in a larger social network, meaning that a message by one influential figure could potentially multiply rapidly (Aral & Walker, 2012). Influence could be seen as another level of controlling access to information, as messages shared by users with little influence in the network may have less ultimate visibility than those shared by the elites. In this way, influencers in a network can essentially control the flow of information (Kwak et al., 2010). If popular journalists on Twitter converse frequently with or retweet the updates of other popular journalists, they could increase the amount of focus on these users in the extended network.

Opinions and observers

While journalists do tend to adapt existing practices to fit the new medium, some aspects of Twitter go against traditional practices, as Twitter can be used to both challenge and reproduce journalistic traditions in news reporting, creating a form of hybrid journalism (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). News values may evolve through collaboration between users, as they can sometimes be 'crowdsourced' on Twitter (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). In addition, hashtags develop organically, mixing straight facts in with personal opinion, often directly going against the ideas around objectivity and non-partisanship held by journalists using the platform (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

Twitter is a medium where individual journalists can hold personal accounts alongside their parent news organisation, complicating issues around personal opinion and a non-partisan and detached journalistic stance. The personal accounts of individual journalists are also often displayed in news broadcasts or mentioned by official accounts when a story they

have created is posted to Twitter, which serves to highlight these personal accounts to a wider audience. Although they frequently retweet the messages posted by organisational accounts, users may feel more inclined to reply to the tweets of a journalist's personal account than a more official account, which is generally not used extensively to reply to user queries (Yardi & boyd, 2010).

This has led to a number of problems negotiating the boundaries of what can and cannot be said on a personal account being used for professional purposes, especially when journalists have been trained to be observers of – not participants in – the news (Posetti, 2009). Journalists using Twitter have to navigate between the roles of reporter and individual citizen, a difficult process when the medium's rapid-fire nature predisposes users to emotional responses (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012; Yardi & boyd, 2010). In their quest to provide coverage of an event on Twitter, some journalists include more of their personal views on the people and organisations they're reporting on, which can affect their credibility (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). Because retweets are often seen to imply endorsement of the messages contained (Bruns & Burgess, 2012), it can result in incorrect information being seen as fact because a trusted journalist reshared it. A journalist who retweets information which is later proved to be incorrect could potentially injure her own credibility and that of her employer (Posetti, 2009). This issue becomes more complicated because retweets can also be designed to draw attention to a particular post (Bruns & Burgess, 2012) due to disbelief, disappointment or anger on behalf of the retweeter.

The issue doesn't extend only to retweets – some messages phrased and posted by the journalists themselves have led to repercussions from their employers. For example, Reuters social media editor Matthew Keys was dismissed after he spread false information about the Boston bombings on his personal Twitter account (Sicha, 2013; Weinger, 2013). In South Africa, eNCA sports anchor Lance Witten was suspended after he joked about the death of a promoter at a music concert in Cape Town (Subramany, 2012).

Many journalists have tried to draw the distinction between a personal account which is used to express the views of an individual, but is seen to represent a news organisation. They do this by including lines in their Twitter profiles such as 'all opinions expressed are my own and don't necessarily reflect those of my employer' or 'retweets do not necessarily imply endorsement'. A number news organisations have also set up policies in order to regulate what can and can't be said on social network sites by the journalists they are associated with (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

Despite the inherent difficulties, many journalists do go beyond the traditional mode of impartial reporter to share their own insights and views. Lasorsa et al. (2012) found that a large percentage of journalists' tweets include personal opinions, although included at a secondary level, giving the information they reported primary importance. 43% of the 22 000 tweets analysed in the study included journalists' opinion, but only 16% were primarily composed to convey that opinion, and journalists from larger, more well-known

organisations included even fewer of their own views in their posts (Lasorsa et al., 2012). This may be because of the brevity enforced by Twitter's 140 character limit, or that journalists from less popular publications may hope to increase their visibility through catchy tweets which could distinguish them in the space and encourage follower growth through retweets (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

Theoretically, Twitter offers individual journalists a platform to report on which is free from institutional editors or gatekeepers – they can control what they include in their own tweets (Lasorsa et al., 2012). But generally, research has found that journalists from smaller, less elite publications are more likely to use the service to deviate from traditional norms, post opinions, and act like 'regular' Twitter users than those at the more popular media organisations (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

Barry Bateman

Often, journalists' personal accounts can gain more attention than the 'official' accounts of their host organisations (Bruns, 2011). During events where live-tweets are one of the only accessible sources of information, a small number of Twitter users may begin to dominate the conversation as they are 'promoted' through retweets and by other users specifically suggesting followers follow their accounts (Hermida et al., 2012; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). This process was experienced first-hand by *Eyewitness News*' Pretoria-based correspondent Barry Bateman, who exponentially gained followers, retweets and mentions during his live-tweeting of the arrest and bail hearing of Olympic athlete Oscar 'Blade Runner' Pistorius in February 2013. Pistorius, who is accused of murdering his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, is a figure whose criminal proceedings drew global attention to the South African journalists reporting on the case.

The judge's decision to restrict television crews from filming Pistorius' bail hearings left Twitter, along with live blogs and occasional live radio, as one of the only options for these international and local audiences looking for up-to-the-minute coverage (Moore, 2013). Twitter proved an incredibly popular option (Grootes, 2013), with the #OscarPistorius hashtag becoming a trending topic both in the country and worldwide. Some reports suggest that from the day of the shooting (February 14) to February 20, some 85% of the 1.3 million total online posts on the topic were posted on Twitter (Thomas, 2013). Twitter also served as a platform for the rapid sharing of inaccuracies, which were often quickly dispelled by others and allowed for the emergence of certain key figures who were seen as trusted reporters of facts surrounding the case (De Waal, 2013).

The live-tweeting of the hearing saw a number of South African journalists gain increased attention on the site, and thousands of additional followers in the process. According to data derived from Twitter-certified analytics provider Radian 6, which focused on Pretorius-related discussion on the social network site, Bateman's username (@barrybateman) was the third most-mentioned on the platform from 14-20 February (after local broadcaster

eNCA and Pistorius' own account) and he was the most-retweeted user overall (Thomas, 2013). Bateman's follower count climbed from just under 10 000 followers before Steenkamp's death to more than 108 000 followers a week later (Grootes, 2013) and more than 137 000 four days after that (Moodie, 2013). His tweet announcing that Pistorius had been granted bail has been retweeted over 2 809 times (Bateman, 2013).

Since the hearing, Bateman's follower count has declined slightly, but he is still actively live-tweeting news stories to a 130 000 strong follower base. He now has more followers of his personal account than his host news organisation's main account (@ewnupdates), which was one of the 50 most influential South African Twitter accounts in 2012 (World Wide Worx & Fuseware, 2012). The volume of daily interactions, his popularity on the platform and broad adoption of the new medium in an emerging market such as South Africa, makes his use of the platform an example which can be used as a case study to investigate how one of the more prominent journalists on Twitter in the country uses the platform.

Research question

The aim of this study is to give insight into how Twitter is used for journalism in South Africa by conducting a case study of *Eyewitness News* correspondent Barry Bateman. In order to investigate how Barry Bateman is using public tweets on Twitter as part of his work, the research will be broken into two parts. First, a study of Bateman's own public tweets and second, by a study of the tweets of users which include his username in their own posts. The specific research questions which this study aims to answer are:

During the period 13 May to 13 July 2013:

1. How does Barry Bateman's use of public tweets on Twitter adapt or deviate from traditional journalistic norms and practices?
2. How can we characterise the broader conversations which take place around the username "@barrybateman" on Twitter?

Significance

While a growing body of research has been conducted internationally on social network sites (including Twitter) recently, fewer studies have been focused on an African context. Studies which have investigated Twitter in African countries have generally considered Twitter's use during periods of political uprising, such as the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia (Paterson, 2013) or social protests in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi (see, for example, Mare, 2013). Although research on social media use on the continent is emerging, a relatively small number of studies have focused on how South African journalists and news media in the country are using platforms such as Twitter to engage with audiences and share information on a day-to-day basis, not only in the context of mass social protest. Jones (2011) considered the ethical dilemmas relating to Twitter and its impact on press freedom in light of the tweets of the *Mail and Guardian's* Mandy Rossouw, while some postgraduate

work has investigated the views of social network sites held by staff at websites such as *News24* (Stassen, 2011). Most recently, Jordaan (2013) conducted a mixed method study of journalists at *Rapport* and the *Mail and Guardian*, which focused on how Facebook and Twitter influenced story selection and presentation at the two newspapers.

This study investigates how an individual journalist is adapting or fundamentally changing his day-to-day practices on Twitter and whether he is using the platform to engage with audiences, or simply for self-promotion and to give continued attention to mainstream media and elite sources. It aims to contribute to existing research in this area by exploring practical methods of Twitter research and finding the theoretical implications for journalists' roles as curators and disseminators of information.

Methodology

Because Bateman's tweets and the level of engagement he has with audiences is the main focus of this study, the primary research method used was content analysis. Content analysis is a method of "studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantifiable manner for the purpose of measuring variables" (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987, p. 150), allowing for Bateman's tweets to be classified in order to characterise his practices. Social network analysis – the study of "patterns of relationships between and among people" and groups (Garton et al., 1999, p. 76) – was also incorporated so that not only Bateman's tweets were investigated, but also *who* he was speaking to and what their interactions with him were.

One of the aims of this study is to investigate the nature of Bateman's use of Twitter. Content analysis was deemed the most suitable method of characterising all his tweets, as it is an effective way to provide a broad overview of the content of a large number of messages and draw inferences about their significance (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Individual tweets were the unit of analysis. In this way, a coding scheme can be applied to classify the tweets. Coding can either be applied to the entire sample (if it is small enough to allow individual inspection), or, in the case of a large sample, a smaller sub-sample can be selected according to some systematic method.

Using this method, patterns in tweeting behaviour can be detected quantitatively over a relatively long period of time (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Given an unambiguous coding scheme, the method also allows for a broadly accurate representation of certain aspects of communication, which allows for a numerically precise conclusion to be drawn at the end of the study (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987).

Given the possibility of coder bias influencing the sample, it is also advisable to conduct tests of inter-coder and intra-coder reliability so that the level of agreement between the judgements of independent coders can be assessed, as well as the regularity and standardisation of the codes applied by the individual researcher in different cases

(Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Such tests were not possible given the time and budget constraints of this single researcher study, and instead it was decided to improve reliability by applying relatively unambiguous categories in the coding.

While more qualitative forms of analysis such as interviewing, observing or surveying Bateman would allow for more in-depth, detailed discussions about his lived experiences (Durrheim, 2006) using Twitter, it would not have allowed for a broader overview of his actual tweets and the classification of the messages themselves in the same way as a more quantitative analysis. This research did not allow themes and categories of information to emerge from the data, but rather adopted a quantitative approach by applying existing framework and definitions in a bid to produce findings which could be compared (at least on a small scale) to the findings of similar studies (Durrheim, 2006). While the inclusion of a qualitative element (for example, an interview with the journalist) is recommended to enhance future research, in this case the researcher was unable to conduct an interview with Bateman, although it was attempted (see Appendix B). To account for the lack of direct input from the subject, steps were taken to discuss conversations and individual tweets in some depth in to provide additional insight beyond simple numerical results. However, as a method, content analysis does have some limitations. Used in isolation, it cannot provide a technique for measuring the reception of a message by an audience and the effect of the communication (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). It is a method which is difficult to adopt for analysing complex forms of communication as it can result in an over-simplification of messages which may have multiple meanings. The findings of a study which uses content analysis are further limited to the specific messages selected and the definitions of the categories applied to them (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). In this case, the research aims to give insight into Bateman's tweeting practices within the designated time period under observation.

Some preliminary social network analysis was also included in this study to attempt to gain some understanding about the people Bateman is communicating with on Twitter and the nature of the ties that link him to them. By considering the patterns of relations between people, social network analysis allows for the identification of prominent connections, and the study of the flow of information from one person or entity to another (Garton et al., 1999). Although a full social network analysis was not conducted, insights from social network analysis were used to compose the part of the sample constructed to investigate the flow of Bateman's tweets and his conversations on Twitter.

The tweets which include "@barrybateman" were viewed from a social network perspective as revealing ties, or relationships, connecting other Twitter users to Bateman (who is mentioned in all the tweets). From a network perspective, the Twitter users are all nodes of a similar type (Twitter users) and they are all connected in a radial or star-shaped network to @barrybateman. These relationships can thus be viewed as a unimodal network as they include one type of node – specifically, they connect users to other users (Hansen et al.,

2010). Given the time constraints of this study it was not considered feasible to explore further characteristics of this network (by for example by developing network metrics or investigating interconnections between the users) although this would have yielded further insights and should be pursued in future research.

Sampling and data collection

The data for the content analysis was a sample constructed from tweets downloaded using the Twitter application programming interface (API). To capture tweets sent from Barry Bateman's personal Twitter account, the following procedure was employed.

Using an adaptation of the sampling method used by Lasorsa et al. (2012), the account was monitored for two months. At set times every day (09H00, 10H00, 11H00, 12H00, 13H00, 14H00, 15H00, 16H00, 17H00), one of Bateman's tweets was recorded using an automated script. This procedure was followed for the period from 13 May to 13 July 2013 (61 days in total). (For exact procedure and details of automation see Appendix A). This time period was chosen to construct a sample of tweets which were unlikely to be heavily influenced by a single news event, and which also represent a mix of off-peak and live-tweets.

The time frame was chosen primarily for convenience, and to suit the timing, scope and nature of a Masters minor dissertation. Nonetheless, the period overlapped with some key events of particular interest to students of journalism, such as the hospitalisation of former South African president Nelson Mandela and United States president Barrack Obama's visit to the country, as well as some topical national news, such as the use of Waterkloof Airport Base by the Gupta family for a private wedding (referred to by the press as 'Guptagate'). As there was only one dedicated computer available for this study, the relatively long time frame also mitigated the impact any connectivity or technical problems would have on data collection.

NodeXL (Smith et al., 2010) was chosen to construct the sample, because it is a free Microsoft Excel extension that allows non-programmers to capture and visualise social network data. While NodeXL is designed to be used for creating and exploring network graphs, not simply data capturing (Smith et al., 2010), when combined with an automation script it provided a usable and reliable method of gathering data through Twitter's API.

NodeXL accesses Twitter data via the Twitter REST and Search APIs, and as such the sample collected is subject to various limitations (Black, Mascaro, Gallagher, & Goggins, 2012). The REST API creates a connection to the Twitter servers on a per-request basis, and the Search API adopts this method to query tweets in real time, with tweets older than 9 days old excluded from the index and a 1500 tweet limitation imposed on the number of results which can be provided (Black et al., 2012). The validity of the sample should be assessed in relation to the known limitations of these Twitter APIs as opposed to collecting the full set of tweets from the source (Lewis, Zamith, & Hermida, 2013). This more complete approach would have required Barry Bateman to request a full copy of all his tweets from Twitter.

Such an approach is recommended for research questions which require a complete sample, but is only possible for researchers who are able to secure this level of cooperation from their subjects. A complete sample would also include private messages (Twitter direct messages) but it was felt that this level of intrusiveness was not necessary for the purposes of this study. The sample collected is nonetheless better than ‘scraping’ Bateman’s Twitter profile and thus represents a unique collection of public tweets posted by him.

Using a similar method to that used by Himelboim, McCreery and Smith (2013), NodeXL was also used to capture the most recent tweets using the keyword “@barrybateman” at noon daily, up until the Twitter-imposed data limit of 100 users accounts per hour was reached. This data was automatically saved into individual documents, which were then manually checked for errors and combined into a single document.

In some cases (particularly over weekends) Bateman did not tweet at least once an hour, so the system captured the same tweet more than once. When compiling the data, these duplicate tweets were removed to ensure that each tweet only had one opportunity to be included in the final data set. Once these copies were excluded, a total N of 386 unique tweets were captured. To obtain a smaller body of tweets so that each tweet could be interpreted and coded by a single researcher, a random sample was generated, where every tweet in the initial sample had an equal and independent chance of being included (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). This resulted in a representative sample of 200 tweets (51.8% of the total collection) selected for more detailed analysis.

A second process only ran once a day, thus capturing tweets from users who included Bateman’s username in a post and so largely avoided duplicated tweets. Because of the number of spam accounts on Twitter, which are set up to automatically target trending topics, keywords and popular hashtags (Kwak et al., 2010), it was necessary to also screen tweets and remove those which were unrelated to any particular hashtag, mentioned multiple trending topics or were otherwise obviously spam tweets. After spam was cleaned from the sample, it resulted in a final data pool of 2764 tweets which included “@barrybateman”.

While it was relatively simple to collect Bateman’s own tweets, trying to collect these tweets about Batman was a more complicated process. While the decision was made to use a search term (specifically, “@barrybateman”) to find people who referred to Bateman in their tweets, a keyword-based study is limited by the fact that he may not specifically be mentioned by his username (Bruns & Burgess, 2012) as users could use his full name, surname or a nickname to describe him instead, or refer to him in a larger discussion without explicitly naming him at all. The prevalence of what has been called ‘subtweeting’ may mean that Bateman may have been referred to obliquely by users in tweets which would not have been captured by the NodeXL system. By simply not mentioning his username, their tweets were excluded from the study.

The research can thus not claim to have gathered an entirely representative collection of all discussion about Bateman on Twitter. The sample represents those tweets which included a hyperlink connection between other Twitter users and @barrybateman and any additional online or offline relationships cannot be identified. As this was a Twitter-only study, it was not possible to observe any other (online or offline) interactions between Bateman and Twitter users, or completely identify their context, such as for example, the relationship between Bateman and the Twitter user (beyond simple categorisations such as 'colleague'). This context may well have influenced the meaning of the tweet. Thus this study cannot give insight into the multiplex network which links Bateman with these Twitter users through multiple types of ties (friend, family, colleague, email contact, etc.) (Hansen et al., 2010). The tweets which included "@barrybateman" and the users who posted them are also not representative of all of Bateman's followers (indeed, some don't follow him at all).

Coding

The individual codes used in analysing the tweets were derived from existing literature and tailored to answer the specific research question (Franzosi, 2004). The two main studies used as a framework for this research were Lasorsa et al. (2012) and Artwick (2013), which focused on the same specific area of social media research. The Lasorsa et al. (2012) study was concerned with whether journalists were altering traditional practices while using Twitter, or if the platform was being normalised. Similarly, the research by Artwick (2013) focused on related issues of journalism as a service (as opposed to a 'lecture') and news conventions. The two studies are some of the most recent investigations into an emerging area of research, and use content analysis as a way to investigate the text of a relatively large volume of tweets.

Using an adaptation of the categories devised by Lasorsa et al. (2012) and Artwick (2013), Bateman's tweets were individually assigned to categories depending on whether the primary message aligned with the criteria detailed below.

Opinion: Tweets which were classified as 'Opinion' were those in which the majority of the message or main intention appeared to be convey Bateman's own views on the topic, thereby diverting from the non-partisan stand of traditional journalism and embracing the potential to share personal opinions (Lasorsa et al., 2012). In cases where the tweet included additional information (for example, the opinion was just a single word or two added on to a tweet which conveyed mainly news), the tweets were marked as 'Secondary opinion' as the conveying of Bateman's thoughts did not appear to be the primary aim of the tweet. As the meaning of a retweet cannot be assumed, retweets of messages which primarily conveyed opinion were not included in this category as it was not possible to ascertain whether the intention was to endorse the opinion of the original author or highlight the tweet for another purpose.

Personal life: Tweets which did not seek to primarily convey news reports or opinions but rather reveal insight into the Bateman's personal life or actions (as distinct from his professional work as a journalist) were coded as 'Personal life' (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

Reporting and live-tweets: The category 'Reporting and live-tweets' was reserved for tweets which were specifically limited to Bateman's work sharing news as a reporter, and which were not retweets, answers to queries, did not contain his own questions or evidence of his own opinion (these would have fallen into different categories). These are tweets which primarily reported on some breaking or planned event in real time (live-tweets) and were designed to share news from the scene to distant followers (Artwick, 2013). Tweets which referred to Bateman's work as a journalist or which shared news headlines and news from organisations other than *Eyewitness News* also fell into this category.

Tweets which *primarily* consisted of an obvious attempt by Bateman to market his own work by getting followers to click on or tune in to a story created by or including him, his colleagues or his employer, were excluded from this category, but were marked as 'promotional tweets' to assess how many tweets were designed to be used for marketing purposes or to aid the distribution of content (Artwick, 2013).

Answers: Tweets were coded as 'Answers' if they showed some level of accountability by answering questions, or substantiating claims by sharing a hyperlink or mentioning a user or offline source (Lasorsa et al., 2012). These included replies to users designed to answer their questions and continue discussion and provide additional information, thereby demonstrating Bateman was willing to discuss and engage followers in his reporting.

Questions: Tweets coded as 'Questions' were those in which Bateman asked a question, either directly to another Twitter user by mentioning or replying to them, or a more general query aimed at engaging his audience.

Retweets: Tweets coded as 'Retweets' needed to be primarily intended as simple retweets, designated with the presence of 'RT', without any obvious alteration of the original message (Lasorsa et al., 2012). Retweets of official media accounts and users who include in their Twitter biography that they are professional journalists were noted as 'mainstream media retweets', in an attempt to mark them as distinct from the retweets of non-media workers.

The hyperlinks Bateman shared were also coded to see which sources he was referring his followers to – and if he was essentially reinforcing a reliance on traditional media elites and continuing to give power to those sources by suggesting they are the most credible (Hermida et al., 2012).

After the tweets were coded, the text was analysed using the AntConc concordance software (Anthony, 2012) to identify the most common words and accurately tally the number of occurrences of elements such as a certain username or hashtag.

Although the collection of 2764 tweets which include “@barrybateman” was too large for a single researcher to study in detail, it was possible to obtain some basic insights about the entire data set. NodeXL automatically captures information about the type of tweet and categorises them as either replies or mentions. However, because this study was specifically concerned with whether users were mentioning or replying to Bateman – as opposed to mentioning or replying to other users – some additional manual work was required to adjust these categories. Any tweets which began with “RT @barrybateman” were identified and manually labelled as retweets, and those which began with “@barrybateman” were labelled as replies. As the inclusion of Bateman’s username was the focus of this part of the study, retweets of users who mentioned Bateman were not coded as retweets, but remained categorised as ‘mentions’. After this was done, every tweet in the data set could be identified as either a retweet, mention or reply, and the frequency of each type of tweet ascertained.

The text of all 2764 tweets was then analysed using AntConc to identify the most frequently mentioned usernames and words. As previously discussed, a small number of Twitter users exert a great influence on the social network (Barash & Golder, 2010), and identifying these influencers can give insight into who is engaging with Bateman and how much attention they are gaining in these conversations on Twitter. To do this, the fifteen most mentioned usernames which were included in 1% or more of the tweets were then identified and details about their accounts (such as the number of followers and the self-description stated in their Twitter bio) captured. This was done to ascertain which individuals or organisations were most visible in the discussions surrounding “@barrybateman” and which users are either being mentioned by Bateman (and thus included in the data set through retweets) or mentioned in connection with him.

Ethical considerations

As this study mainly involved automated data collecting from Twitter and the content analysis of web texts, it falls under the purview of the complex issues of ethics in internet research (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). The study focused largely on the text of the tweets rather than the human subjects behind them, and so it could be argued that it should be exempt from in-depth ethical review as it is primarily concerned with published information that is already publically available (Markham & Buchanan, 2012; Wassenaar, 2006). The decision was taken to adopt a more cautious approach, for reasons which are detailed below.

Ethics in human research centre on principles such as autonomy and respect for dignity, justice, beneficence and nonmaleficence (Markham & Buchanan, 2012; Wassenaar, 2006). But the very idea about whether or not this study classifies as research with human subjects is questionable and a topic undergoing debate. The capturing and analysis of Twitter data does not involve directly contacting or interacting with human subjects, and does not reveal

private information which these users have not knowingly chosen to make public. It involves texts which are broadcast and potentially available to anyone on the web.

This is a point which is included in Twitter's terms of service agreement (Twitter, 2012c, np), which all users must consent to in order to use the service. The 'Basic Terms' and 'Your Rights' sub sections, respectively, state:

"The Content you submit, post, or display will be able to be viewed by other users of the Services and through third party services and websites (go to the account settings page to control who sees your Content). You should only provide Content that you are comfortable sharing with others under these Terms."

"By submitting, posting or displaying Content on or through the Services, you grant us a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, reproduce, process, adapt, modify, publish, transmit, display and distribute such Content in any and all media or distribution methods (now known or later developed)."

Twitter also says that it does "encourage and permit broad re-use of Content" by persons other than its specified third parties via the Twitter API. The social network site's privacy policy says much the same in regards to the public nature of tweets, explaining to users that the service is "primarily designed to help you share information with the world", "most of the information you provide us is information you are asking us to make public" and warns that "public information is broadly and instantly disseminated" (Twitter, 2012d, np). But while some view this type of research as that which does not truly involve human subjects, the fact remains tweets are created by individual, often identifiable human beings, and hence there are still some ethical issues which need to be discussed.

The ethical considerations for internet research – particularly around non-maleficence and justice – are greatly influenced by perceptions of what is public and private. But views on exactly what is private information can differ from person to person and from researcher to users (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). While all users who have agreed to Twitter's terms and not opted to make their profile private should (ideally) be aware that their tweets are publicly archived and searchable, they may still consider them private texts or feel they should be approached or credited in some way if their messages are used (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). This is further complicated by the fact that users often don't read or understand terms of service documentation and are often unaware that the terms of use of social network sites such as Twitter often see the data as an asset of the company, which is shared with third party services, even though Twitter says ownership rests with its users (Puschmann & Burgess, 2013). Data is often a commodity to be traded for the valuable insights into consumer and voters' minds it can provide to marketers and political organisations (Puschmann & Burgess, 2013), instead of the messages users thought only their comparatively small number of followers would see.

For the purposes of this report, it was not feasible to comply with the ideas around the principle of autonomy by obtaining the informed consent of every single Twitter user whose tweets were included in the data capture. This is because only the tweets and usernames of the individuals were available to the researcher, so the only way of contacting them would have been through an overly labour-intensive approach via Twitter mentions. Thus, while Bateman was contacted via email and notified of the nature of the case study of his account (see Appendix B), other majority of other users did not receive the same level of scrutiny and so were not contacted individually. The fifteen most mentioned users in the “@barrybateman” network (who are discussed in slightly more detail) were contacted on Twitter and notified of the nature of the study and their inclusion in the research.

Confidentiality and anonymity for the authors of the tweets could not be guaranteed because of the nature of the research. While Bateman is a public figure who agreed to participate in the study, the majority of other Twitter users could not be offered the anonymity usually afforded to research participants. For accuracy and to avoid misinterpreting or misrepresenting messages posted by Twitter users, the decision was taken to use actual tweets to illustrate common or atypical examples in this report. Removing mentioned usernames or identifiable information could have distorted the meaning of the tweet (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Even if the username was randomised or altered to preserve an individual’s identity, tweets are indexed by search engines like Google and so the original tweet and the name used by its author could still be found by running a simple Google search on the quote. Thus it is not feasible for the report to both accurately represent the texts collected and preserve the anonymity of their authors.

Other steps were taken to ensure the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence were met. For example, the data collected was protected and destroyed after the conclusion of the study and will not be used for any further projects. However, it is possible that this report may allow the activity of the Twitter accounts to be linked to their offline owners. This is unlikely to cause any harm, but it is impossible to foresee all possible consequences, both in the present and in the future (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). For example, it is possible that the report could be seen to highlight opinions on contentious news topics which may have negative consequences for individuals should their views be given additional attention through the research.

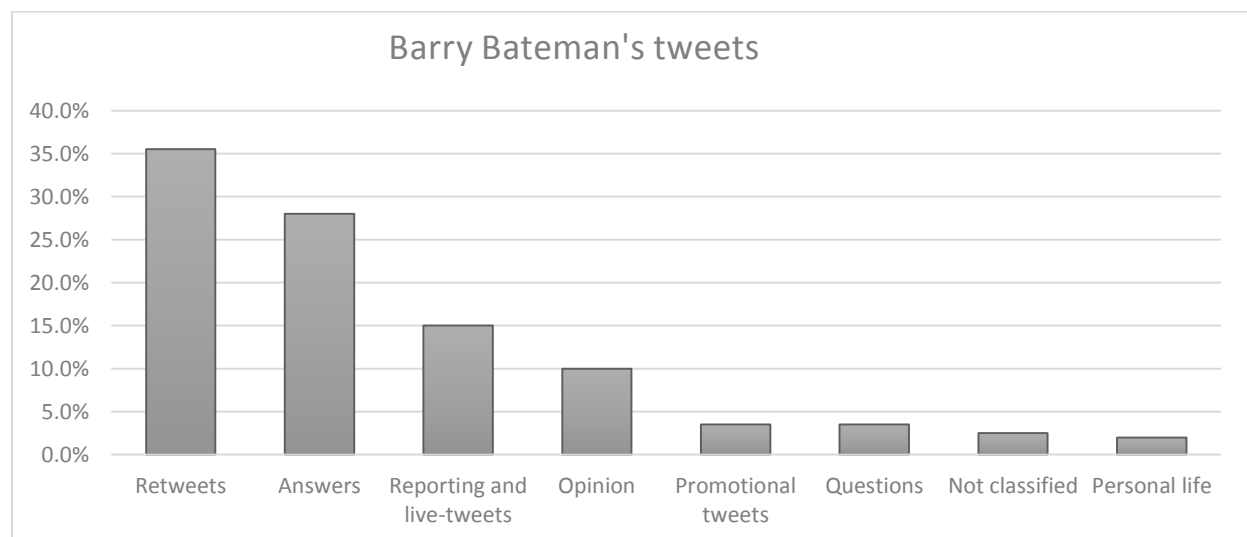
On reflection though, there is only a small chance of this considering the size and scope of this study, which does not focus on tweets in general – only those shared by or mentioning Bateman. The chances that something potentially incriminating or harmful has been shared is slightly decreased by the fact that users mentioning Bateman may understand that he would see and possibly retweet the messages which mention him, thereby sharing anything they said with his large following, and adjust their messages accordingly.

Findings

Barry Bateman's tweets

After Bateman's tweets were coded according to their primary content and the categories described above, the results were as follows:

Category	Number of tweets	Percentage
Retweets	71	35.5%
Answers	56	28%
Reporting and live-tweets	30	15%
Opinion	20	10%
Promotional tweets	7	3.5%
Questions	7	3.5%
Not classified	5	2.5%
Personal life	4	2%
Total	200	100%



Retweets

In total, more than a third of the tweets posted by Bateman (35.5%) were retweets. Of these, 66% were retweets of the posts by mainstream media – either posted from official Twitter accounts of newspapers and news channels, or those belonging to professional journalists. Of those retweets, 31% (15 retweets) were of posts shared by Bateman's own

colleagues, the official *Eyewitness News* accounts and a radio station which uses *Eyewitness News* content (specifically, *Talk Radio 702*). For example, he shared this post by his co-worker about South African businessman Kenny Kunene:

BarryBateman: RT @alexeliseev: Kenny Kunene popped up at Oscar Pistorius' trial. Now he lays flowers at #Madiba hospital. He's the ultimate photo bomb.

2013-06-25 01:24 PM

A third of all the posts Bateman retweeted were originally shared by users who didn't indicate on their Twitter profiles that they worked as professional journalists. Still, many of these users were either the official accounts of community and educational organisations, government groups or celebrities, who shared news or their opinion on recent events. These users ranged from popular cartoonist Jeremy 'Jerm' Nell (who occasionally works with *Eyewitness News* and other local media such as the *Sunday Times* and the *New Age*) to actors and local universities. For instance, he shared this post by the University of Pretoria:

BarryBateman: RT @UPTuks: Remember to visit the Nelson Mandela Digital Archive Exhibition now on display in the Merensky 2 Library. Exhibition runs until Wed 31 July.

2013-07-04 07:03 AM

Even the small portion of users retweeted by Bateman who did not claim to work as professional journalists shared news or commentary on some topical issue – for example, one posted a photograph of a fire at a shopping centre in Johannesburg:

BarryBateman: RT @KGKekana22: Big Fire at #Broadacres @markasaieva @eNCAnews @barrybateman <http://t.co/Yzq5IW8cYX>

2013-05-1 09:50 PM

In general, retweets of photographs were quite rare, and also related to some news event – only seven (9.8%) of all the retweets included photos, two of which were shared by professional journalists. Of the other five, two were amateur photos of the aeroplanes which brought United States President Barrack Obama to South Africa, one a photo of a get well message to Mandela and another the photo of the fire mentioned above. Only one – a photo of a small child eating ice cream – was not related in some way to stories Bateman had been covering or some other news event.

Answers

One of the largest categories of tweets was those which were answers to questions Bateman was sent. In total, more than a quarter (28%) of the tweets analysed were clear answers to a question as they included either an abbreviated but direct response which suggested the tweets were part of a larger conversation or a full or partial quote of the original question. For instance:

BarryBateman: *Muslim Lawyers Association. @ndy_75: hi Barry, who is the MLA?"*

2013-06-26 11:58 AM

Of the tweets in this category, 32 (57%) were direct replies, while the remainder referenced the original query through a quote and mentioned the user who sent it. Only one 'answer' tweet was related to Bateman's personal life (as opposed to his work as a journalist) and so was not included in this category.

Reporting and live-tweets

Nineteen tweets (9.5% of the sample) were classified as live-tweets, as they typically contained a description of an event and started with a specific hashtag (for example, #ChanelleHenning for tweets from the trial of those accused of murdering Gauteng mother Chanelle Henning). Of these, 16 (84% of all live-tweets) ended with Bateman's initials (BB), which suggests these were simultaneously posted to *Eyewitness News*' official account. The *Eyewitness News* journalists share access and reference the author of each tweet by including his or her initials at the end. For example:

Barry Bateman: *#ChanelleHenning the Judge is arranging dates - written heads of argument to be filed by 8/8, oral arguments on 11/9. Court adjourns. BB*

2013-07-12 12:37 PM

While all of the tweets included quotes or some textual description of the events, four also included a multimedia element – in this case, photographs. These were all related to Nelson Mandela's hospitalisation, and showed events outside the Pretoria clinic where he was being treated, from singing choirs to the cards left by well-wishers outside the gates.

Eleven of the tweets in the sample were related to Bateman's work as a journalist and broker of information. While he does not share a lot of unequivocally personal information on Twitter, he does offer his followers some insight into his daily routines by answering questions about his location or updates on what he was doing while reporting at some event. Some tweets shared links where followers could find more information on a topic he

had been discussing or breaking news in general, while others referenced the comings and goings of his co-workers:

Barry Bateman: #MiddayReport my colleague @alexeliseev in for @StephenGrootes. Rock n roll, comrade.

2013-06-17 10:08 AM

Only one tweet clearly showed Bateman actively using Twitter to engage with a potential source – in this case, it was after a user mentioned Bateman and another user in a tweet to inform him that some passengers were left stranded after a flight was cancelled. He tweeted the mentioned user directly in order to find out more:

Barry Bateman: @YJvR999 please follow me and direct message me you cell number to follow up on this.

2013-06-02 11:53 AM

Of the tweets which were classified as related to Bateman's work as a reporter, two were tweets which suggested followers consult *Eyewitness News'* official live reporting account if they want to follow his reporting. Although this also served as promotion for *Eyewitness News'* official Twitter presence, they also informed users of where to gain more information, and so were included in this category.

Opinion

Ten percent of the tweets analysed contained some form of Bateman's own opinion. Of these, 80% involved the inclusion of a personal view as the primary content of the tweet, with the remaining 20% involving a secondary level of opinion. Topics on which he expressed his opinion ranged from religion to politics, particularly related to current affairs such as Mandela's hospitalisation and the lengthy detention of South African oncologist Cyril Karabus in the United Arab Emirates. The majority of the tweets which contained insights into Bateman's own opinion on the story were written to convey that opinion, not to communicate news or information on the story itself. For example, Bateman criticised South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane in the wake of her statements regarding the use of a national key point by guests of a private wedding:

Barry Bateman: *It's obscene - 2 weeks ago Nkoana-Mashabane decries Gupta scandal, today she ensures more taxpayer cash is stuffed into their pockets.*

2013-05-30 07:47 AM

A smaller number of tweets included Bateman's own opinion on a level which was secondary to the main intent of the tweet, which was usually to share a link or some other short statement. For example, instead of simply retweeting the post, he added his own view on a satirical piece shared by the (then) online editor of the *Mail and Guardian*:

Barry Bateman: *Hahaha nice one. "@ChrisRoper: 'I mean, don't you follow barrybateman on Twitter?' An interview with Number One.
<http://t.co/JtWOy3wrwC>"*

2013-05-28 07:09 AM

It must be noted that in this study, retweets were not coded as instances of opinion, even though it could be argued that some of the posts Bateman shared could be seen as endorsement of the views in the tweet. Because it was not possible to identify whether Bateman retweeted these posts because he supported their message or for some other reason, these tweets were not included in this category.

Promotional tweets

As per the explanation above, tweets which were primarily aimed at promoting Bateman, his work or his home news organisation were not included in the 'retweets' category. There were seven in all (3.5% of total tweets), six of which were retweets of posts by others which complimented Bateman, said they were looking forward to meeting him or aimed to advertise his attendance at an event or on a television show. For example, he retweeted a reply from the *Mail and Guardian*'s dedicated live-tweeting account after he was announced as one of their 200 Young South African award winners:

Barry Bateman: *RT @MG_Reporter: "@barrybateman: Thank you @MG_Reporter for a love afternoon. #200YSA" glad you enjoyed it and congratulations (@Sage_Of_Absurd)*

2013-06-11 02:57 PM

In one of these self-promotional tweets, he shared the headline and link to an article he wrote for *Eyewitness News* and attributed it to himself (even though mentioning yourself is a practice which is not common on Twitter, suggesting he may have shared an automatically generated post):

Barry Bateman: *Oscar crime scene photos gratuitous?* by @barrybateman
<http://t.co/Wl03kNZQVH>

2013-06-04 12:59 PM

Questions

While Bateman dedicated a considerable number of his tweets to answering questions from his followers, he asked only a few questions himself. In total, just 7 tweets (3.5% of the sample) were questions, all of which were directed at specific users, either through beginning the tweet with their username (4 of the tweets) or by asking a question and then quoting the message of the tweet and mentioning the username of the post he was referring to. For example, he replied to a user asking for more information about an interview with *Daily Maverick* journalist De Wet Potgieter, whose controversial report on Al-Qaeda activity in South Africa was later found to include inaccuracies:

Barry Bateman: *No. What was said. "@naeemgrd: I hope u heard the interview on @radioislam ths morning regarding #DeWet"*

2013-05-15 08:26 AM

Not classified

Only a small percentage of the tweets (2.5%) did not fall clearly into any of the coding categories, and were marked for their primary content. Two of these tweets involved sharing a URL – one was simply a headline and link to an article, but was not coded as a link shared in relation to Bateman's work as a journalist as it was a feature story related to religion in the United Kingdom, and so not directly related to his day-to-day work as a news reporter in Pretoria. Another included link to a conference website and a congratulations to an organiser. The remaining three tweets that did not fall clearly into the other categories included two replies (one a compliment, the other seemingly designed to notify a user of a conversation) and a comment on a humorous tweet by a local photojournalist on the importance of punctuality:

Barry Bateman: *Seconded. @CornelvHeerden: I will vote for any political party who has the decency to pitch up 5min early for their events and conferences.*

2013-06-22 01:02 PM

Personal life

The smallest percentage of classified tweets was those which involved Bateman discussing or giving his followers insight into his personal life, with only 4 tweets (2% of the sample) meeting the criteria for this category. In one, he answered a question about the age of his daughter after he shared a photo of her in a Nelson Mandela-themed outfit:

Barry Bateman: "Two. :) RT @tugela1: adorable!! How old is she now?"

2013-07-05 08:11 PM

In another, he posted a photograph of dentistry equipment with the caption "Fear. Torture tools". Another tweet shared a link to a music file and the last was a complaint about the time he'd spent in traffic. This suggests that despite the fact that Bateman technically holds a personal account on the social network, it is largely put to professional use, as he does not use it to share a vast amount of information about subjects that are not directly related to his work.

Hyperlink sharing

Of all the posts (tweets and retweets) Bateman shared on Twitter, 50 (25%) included links to some external media. Of these, thirteen were photos, two were to YouTube videos, two were to files on audio streaming service SoundCloud, one a music link, one a Facebook link and the remaining 31 were to articles or resources posted on blogs, news portals and official organisation websites.

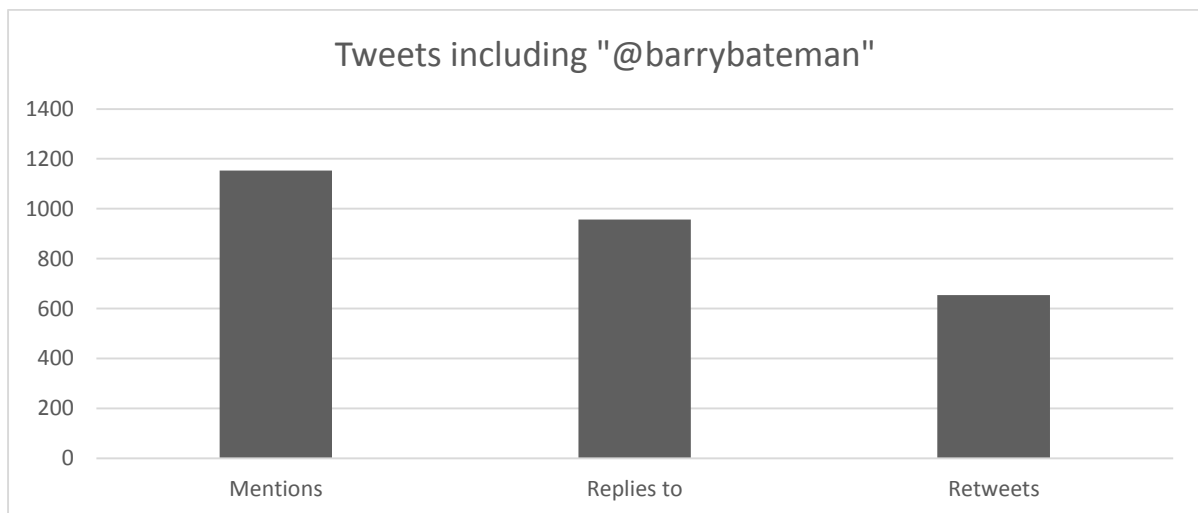
Of these 31 hyperlinks, the majority (19) were links to mainstream media organisations, both in South Africa and abroad. They included *Sky News*, the *Times of India*, the *Daily Mail* and local news sites such as *Independent Online*, *News24*, *Business Day*, *Times Live*, and the *Mail and Guardian*. While the majority of links to these sites appeared either once (rarely twice) in the sample, the two most popular shared domains belonged to the *Daily Maverick* and *Eyewitness News*, with Bateman sharing three links to each site.

Type of website	Number of links shared
Mainstream news sites	19
Photographs (pic.twitter.com)	13
Other sites (Wikipedia, blogs etc.)	7
Official websites of political organisations, community projects and schools	5

YouTube	2
SoundCloud	2
Music file	1
Facebook	1

The “@barrybateman” network

Of the 2764 tweets which included “@barrybateman”, 1153 tweets (41.7%) mentioned Bateman, 957 (34.6%) were direct replies to him and the remaining 654 (23.6%) were straightforward retweets of a message Bateman had posted with no additional commentary added.



This suggests that the users in this partial network are connected to Bateman primarily through mentions, but also through a great number of replies and, to a lesser extent, retweets. This combination of ties allows attention and information to flow in different directions through the network – users aim messages at Bateman through direct replies, but also share information with their own followers through retweets.

After the tweets were analysed using the concordancing software, it was also possible to gain some insight into the most frequently mentioned usernames and terms in the data set. This has been reproduced graphically below using Wordle (Feinberg, 2013) – in this instance, outliers such as common English words and “@barrybateman” (mentioned in all the tweets) were removed.



Figure 1: Most mentioned terms in the “@barrybateman” network

The Wordle visualisation demonstrates how many users are sharing Bateman's posts with their own followers – leading to the high number of RTs in the sample – but also gives insight into the topics which were under discussion in the two month period. These included Mandela's hospitalisation ("Madiba", "Mandela", "hospital"), the previously-mentioned use of a national key point for a private wedding ("Waterkloof", "GuptaGate", South Africa's President "Zuma") and discussions around Potgieter's Al-Qaeda report ("Potgieter", "@dailymaverick", "@radioislam"). The large number of mentions of "BB" – the initials Bateman uses to sign off on live-tweets – shows how many of his real time reports are spread and discussed.

The most mentioned usernames (besides Bateman's own) were as follows:

Username	Given name on Twitter	Frequency	Twitter biography
@AlastairTS	Alastair Teeling Smith	103 (3.7%)	Programme manager at Talk Radio 702 in Johannesburg, South Africa.
@matthewbuckland	Matt	91 (3.3%)	A tech entrepreneur on a mission. Creative Spark http://memeburn.com http://gearburn.com http://ventureburn.com
@alexeliseev	Alex Eliseev	60 (2.2%)	Journalist. Writer. Adventurer. Author of upcoming book about a 13-year-old cold

			case.
@aadilFulat	Aadil	55 (2%)	n/a
@dailymaverick	Daily Maverick	54 (2%)	For people with brains and money. And a browser. http://www.facebook.com/dailymaverick
@Melvynemile	Proud2bKALLIT	54 (2%)	Awesome\$
@PikkieGreeff	Pikkie Greeff	50 (1.8%)	National Secretary of the South African National Defence Union (SANDU) the largest military trade union in the SANDF. AS ALLOWED BY THE CONCOURT!
@alicia	Alicia	47 (1.7%)	Not that one.The other one.
@radioislam	Radio Islam	47 (1.7%)	Official Twitter account of Radio Islam International. Stay informed with the latest happenings on our airwaves. Audiostream worldwide via http://www.radioislam.co.za
@helenzille	Helen Zille	45 (1.6%)	Western Cape Premier and Leader of South Africa's Official Opposition Party: The Democratic Alliance (@DA_News)
@garethcliff	Gareth Cliff	43 (1.5%)	Chief plenipotentiary. Descended from the apes. Defender of the Faithless. Join the revolution.
@SADOLK	SAD	42 (1.5%)	Serial despiser of corrupt politicians, reborn Atheist, generally trying to make good in life.
@ewnreporter	EWN Reporter	40 (1.4%)	Updates from the Eyewitness News team - always factual, sometimes funny, often insightful.
@jonahboat	Johann Botha	35 (1.3%)	poet. coder. amateur human being.
@mandywiener	Mandy Wiener	33 (1.2%)	Reporter at Eyewitness News. Author of Killing Kebble - An Underworld Exposed. Series Editor of The Youngsters.

Of these users, four were linked to Bateman's work at *Eyewitness News* (three are colleagues and one is the organisation's official account). The most mentioned users also include a prominent radio DJ (@garethcliff), popular online publication, the *Daily Maverick*,

and Helen Zille, the leader of South Africa's biggest opposition party. The rest of these individuals are a mix of users who, to the researcher's knowledge, are not particularly prominent in public life or the media industry and have a relatively small number of followers (one had just 7 at the time of writing). Their Twitter bios do not include any stated affiliation with institutional elites or mainstream media.

It must be noted that some of these users did not engage with Bateman directly – for example, Helen Zille was mentioned by others in a discussion which was then retweeted. But a number of the other accounts were highlighted and received numerous responses through their interactions with Bateman. For example, Alastair Teeling Smith (@AlastairTS) has fewer than 900 followers himself, but through retweets by Bateman, which were then in turn retweeted and replied to by Bateman's followers, his username became the most mentioned in the sample. Smith, along with Matthew Buckland (@matthewbuckland) were involved in a discussion about the location of Air Force One aircraft during US President Barrack Obama's visit to the country – a popular news event at the time – which received a high number of replies and retweets. This demonstrates how Twitter allows topical news to be widely discussed and rapidly shared beyond follower-followed networks (Bruns & Burgess, 2012).

Discussion

Sharing the stories of media and institutional elites

The single largest category of Bateman's tweets were retweets, and so it is worth asking exactly which updates Bateman was reposting (and the identity of their authors). While retweeting can be seen as 'sharing' one's Twitter stream with others (Lasorsa et al., 2012), two thirds of the users that Bateman retweeted were those which also held positions in the media – specifically, as commentators or presenters on prominent South African shows or as practicing journalists, editors and media owners. This suggests that he is sharing his timeline and the eyes of a potential 130 000-strong audience with organisations or individuals which already have access to (and can share their own viewpoints with) their own listeners, readers, viewers and followers. In addition to this, the majority of URLs included in Bateman's tweets (including retweets) were to the websites of mainstream media organisations. While hyperlinks can be used to promote transparency by citing sources and giving followers a way to authenticate statements (Lasorsa et al., 2012), the high number of links to mainstream outlets suggests he is encouraging his followers to gain information from organisations which already feature prominently in the media landscape. In this way, the analysis of Bateman's journalistic practices of Twitter supports the argument which suggests that Twitter is used largely to amplify stories from the mainstream media, further aiding already elite sources to continue to drive conversations on a mass scale (Mare, 2013), as well as helping the 'rich get richer' by being the focus of more attention on Twitter.

While it would be inaccurate to generalise and suggest that Bateman did not retweet any posts by users who did not have a great number of their own followers on Twitter (or include on their profile that they held positions at media organisations), he did this minimally. Of the remaining third of retweets which were not originally posted by mainstream media journalists and organisations, the majority were posted by prominent local users and major South African institutions or government bodies. These included, for example, activist and Treatment Action Campaign founder Zackie Achmat, Twitter personality Sentletse Diakanyo, and former radio presenter and current deputy director general for public diplomacy at South Africa's Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Clayson Monyela. Although this study focused primarily on media elites (journalists, news anchors, etc.) more than institutional elites, this does suggest that through his retweets, Bateman also increases the visibility of tweets from already popular users (many which have more than 10 000 followers themselves) and gives emphasis to the voices of these select few. The tally of the most frequently mentioned usernames in the conversations including "@barrybateman" also suggests that other reporters and popular users who hold positions of power in society (ranging from media organisations to political and military figures) are gaining additional attention through the link to Bateman. In this way, the trend of disproportionate flows of attention on Twitter continues, as those who already have great influence and numbers of followers on the social network site gain even more attention, and general users largely receive information from those at the 'top' (Barash & Golder, 2010; Lasorsa et al., 2012).

In line with Artwick's (2013) findings that reporters tend to favour content from their own organisation, Bateman also shared a number of posts which included hyperlinks to *Eyewitness News* content or mentioned his colleagues and organisation. This was evident in the number of retweets, as well as in the number of mentions included and the links shared in his tweets. Of the messages Bateman retweeted, a substantial portion (21% of all retweets) were messages posted by his direct colleagues and organisation – from fellow *Eyewitness News* reporters to the *Eyewitness News* Twitter accounts and the official account of *Talk Radio 702*. In addition to the retweets, he also mentioned his colleagues and the official accounts of his organisation frequently, with the official @ewnreporter account and fellow *Eyewitness News* journalist Alex Eliseev (@alexeliseev) proving to be the most frequently mentioned usernames overall in his tweets. In the collection of tweets which included "@barrybateman", four of the fifteen most frequently mentioned usernames belonged to his colleagues or *Eyewitness News*, suggesting posts by and mentioning co-workers and related accounts are frequently shared by Bateman or discussed in relation to him.

Bateman's preference for *Eyewitness News* content didn't only extend to mentions and retweets -- the sample also included three tweets which specifically involved Bateman referring his followers to other *Eyewitness News* accounts and staff, which served the dual purpose of providing his followers with aid to gain more information and to promote his

own organisation's coverage. He also shared links to *Eyewitness News* content, both on its official website and audio hosted on its SoundCloud account. To a lesser extent, he also used Twitter as a method to share his own achievements and advertise occasions ranging from a TV appearance to a presentation at a literary festival, which could be seen as an attempt to both inform followers and promote his own activities. Thus, in addition to showing a preference for retweeting mainstream media accounts and those held by prominent institutions and personalities, Bateman also used Twitter as a promotion platform for the dissemination of his and his organisations' own content.

In this, Bateman is very unlike NPR journalist Andy Carvin. Hermida, Lewis and Zamith (2012) found in their analysis of Carvin's tweets that he has adopted a new mode of journalism which focuses on actively identifying and highlighting prominent citizen voices. Although Bateman did reshare posts by users who did not hold an official position at a media organisation or entity which could be seen as part of the institutional elite, these tweets were only a small fraction (8.4%) of all retweets. While journalists such as Carvin may be including a large percentage of posts from alternative voices (such as activists and bloggers), the tweets Bateman shared are generally in line with previous research which suggests journalists favour sources they are familiar with (Hermida et al., 2012), giving preference to mainstream media and institutional elites.

Without interviewing Bateman, one can only speculate about why his journalistic practices are so different to Carvin's. His preference for elite sources may be influenced by the relatively low level of Twitter adoption in South Africa, the nature of major breaking news events in the country or other features of this particular media landscape. Bateman is a regional correspondent for a national media organisation in a country where less than 5% of the population (World Wide Worx & Fuseware, 2012) uses Twitter. While some citizens, bloggers and activists in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia were posting frequent reports on Twitter (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012) perhaps due to the nature of the news event (in this case, a major political revolution), citizen journalism has not been widely adopted in South Africa (Jones, 2011) and protests in this country do not typically involve the Twitterati at this stage. There may simply not be the same number of local voices regularly sharing news from the ground on this platform for Bateman to identify and repost their reports. This is not to say South Africans aren't using mobile or online tools to sharing news from events they witness – they may simply be using an alternative medium to Twitter (for example, SMS, Facebook or Mxit). This could be further exacerbated by the fact that quickly establishing credibility and verifying reports on Twitter is a difficult process (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012), and mainstream media organisations and their journalists may have built the necessary level of trust with Bateman for him to consider resharing their posts, even if non-media workers are posting about the same topic. This may explain why many of the tweets Bateman did reshare from 'general' users included a photograph (for example, of the Broadacres fire) as it added to their credibility if they could not just tell, but also *show* what was happening.

In a similar way to how news organisations use social media as a ‘filler’ but favour the reports of their own reporters or established media outlets as soon as they became available (Bruno, 2011), Bateman may favour sources (including his own organisation and colleagues) which he has engaged with before and thus views as more credible as they have proved themselves previously (Hermida et al., 2012). In doing so, he continues the long-standing practice of mainstream media to rely on sources which hold positions of power in society (Hermida et al., 2012) and amplifies their voices on yet another platform. Just as newsroom pressures may have led to an over representation of previously used and verified sources in reports in South African broadsheets (Duncan, 2012), the difficulty and effort involved in authenticating sources on Twitter may be leading to a similar reduction in the diversity of voices cited on the social network site.

The boundaries of the personal and professional

While everything from his description (“*Eyewitness News* Pretoria correspondent. Co-author on working title, *Behind The Door: the Oscar and Reeva Story*”) to the lack of posts about his life outside *Eyewitness News* made it clear that Bateman mainly uses Twitter as a professional tool, he did occasionally deviate from the role of the traditional non-partisan reporter and share his own views along with the news. The number of tweets which conveyed opinion (either on a primary or secondary level) only accounted for a fifth of all the tweets analysed, which was significantly less than findings of other studies – for example, Lasorsa et al. (2012) found that 42% of the tweets analysed included instances of the journalist’s personal opinion. This may be linked to the fact that Bateman is employed by a mainstream media organisation – that study also suggested that journalists from prominent news outlets were less likely to share their own views on Twitter than their ‘non-elite’ counterparts, as those who work at these larger companies may hold more tightly to traditional ideas around non-partisanship as they have “so much vested in business as usual” (Lasorsa et al., 2012, p. 31).

Nevertheless, Bateman did share his opinion on aspects ranging from religion and legalised drug use to politics and the South African government. For example, as was discussed previously, he was involved in reporting on Mandela’s most recent hospital visit. However, while he posted more neutral live updates from the Pretoria clinic about the family’s comings and goings and shared news on the former president’s health, he also commented on the topic in a way which showed his own views. In this case, in the wake of legal battles which ensued as the Mandelas worked to ready the future grave site, he posted this tweet which suggested his own opinions of the “model family”:

Barry Bateman: *And in the Sunday Times, more tall tales, this time from that model family the Mandelas - fibs to argue urgency in the burial saga.*

2013-07-07 07:57 AM

Along with the tweet about the Gupta scandal and Nkoana-Mashabane, which indicated his opinion of the politician, Bateman also aired his views on political and economic problems in Zimbabwe and the South African government's lack of response:

Barry Bateman: *Gross human rights violations wouldn't - check Zim - why would this? @ewnreporter #Karabus Fransman says case hasn't strained UAE relations.*

2013-05-17 11:45 AM

This type of commentary plays directly into the discussions around the inclusion of personal views on subjects which are dealt with in a professional capacity. Although it can be argued that Bateman has a right (even a duty) to be critical as part of media's role as the fourth estate, by adding his opinion to the conversation around these issues, he is moving beyond the role of observer and testing the boundaries of the realm of balanced and fair commentary (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). While some level of subjective commentary can help foster critical discussions, too much can hurt a journalist's credibility (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). While journalists are traditionally expected to withhold their political and personal views (Lasorsa et al., 2012), examples such as these suggest that Bateman does share his own opinions on Twitter, even on subjects he is also covering professionally.

In contrast to this, Bateman's tweets which were shared from events he was reporting on assumed a very straightforward and factual tone, suggesting he may be adopting a different persona when directly reporting on the news rather than passing on other second-hand information or views to his followers. These live-tweets simply explained what he was witnessing – for example, the minute-by-minute progression of the trial of those accused of murdering Channele Henning, or the events outside the hospital where Mandela was being treated. In this way, Bateman shared his access to information with followers in real time, and used the platform to inform them, conforming to the idea of journalism as a service (Artwick, 2013). As the majority of these tweets were also cross-posted to one of *Eyewitness News'* official accounts, they suggest these are tweets which Bateman clearly distinguishes as work-related and are designed to be fast and factual.

Bateman has experienced at least one occasion where his role as a journalist on Twitter was openly questioned and where the difficulties of moving beyond the boundaries of a non-partisan stance was highlighted. In this case, one of his replies was included in the sample for study, and the entire thread investigated for the added context needed to understand the conversation it formed part of. After sharing a headline and a link to a Guardian story on religious violence in England, Bateman was accused of "broadcast[ing] anything that's negative towards Islam" and promoting negative views of the religion by a user. He replied and quoted a version of the original tweet, leading to a lengthy back-and-forth which others later joined. The discussion moved to directly discuss Bateman's use of Twitter as a journalist, if he "tweets facts" (in the words of one follower) or if he was biased in the

reports he chose to share on Twitter. Although it is not possible to fully identify all the replies to the tweets, a selection of the main discussion can be found below:

Barry Bateman: *Anti-Muslim reprisals after Woolwich attack*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/may/23/woolwich-attack-anti-muslim-reprisals>

2013-05-23 08:26 AM

@aadilFulat: *@barrybateman I find that you often broadcast anything that's negative towards islam..will your reply come in the form of a retweet ?*

2013-05-23 08:33 AM

@aadilFulat: *@abed_v1. @barrybateman has used his twitter account as platform to promote islam in a negative way..*

2013-05-23 08:37 AM

Barry Bateman: *By tweeting news? Oh dear. Sit down. "@aadilFulat: BB has used his twitter account as platform to promote islam in a negative way"*

2013-05-23 08:39 AM

@abed_v1: *@aadilFulat @barrybateman Tweets facts. Extremists always cause it for peace loving Muslims. Ties in with my piece: <http://bit.ly/185tXSp>.*

2013-05-23 09:52 AM

@aadilFulat: *@abed_v1 @barrybateman should report tragedies all around the world not only in these western countries*

2013-05-23 10:08 AM

Barry Bateman: *You're telling me what news I should follow and read? Get a grip. "@aadilFulat: BB should report tragedies all around the world..."*

2013-05-23 10:17 AM

Barry Bateman: @aadilFulat further, I'm not reporting this matter. I'm on good ol' Pretoria. Discern between BB the reporter & BB the person.

2013-05-23 10:17 AM

Barry Bateman: @aadilFulat what arrogance telling me what I must or mustn't post to my account. SMH

2013-05-23 10:19 AM

@aadilFulat: @barrybateman I'm sure you are happy that I am getting abusive and insulting tweets towards me and my religion after you rt my q publicly

2013-05-23 10:31 AM

Barry Bateman: No, you called me out publicly. Twitter is public. "@aadilFulat: after you rt my q publicly"

2013-05-23 10:37 AM

@_lauraalice: @barrybateman @aadilfulat no, he tweeted you directly then you quoted him for all your followers to see. What's the point?

2013-05-23 10:54 AM

@_Grandeur_: *grabs popcorn* RT @barrybateman: No, you called me out publicly. Twitter is public. "@aadilFulat: after you rt my q publicly"

2013-05-23 10:54 AM

@live_dreamteam: @barrybateman @aadilFulat Barry your ignorance is upsetting mate - remember you reported of hawks Macintosh polela over inappropriate remar

2013-05-23 11:05 AM

@live_dreamteam: @barrybateman @aadilFulat wonder if you will be in the news next ?

2013-05-23 11:06 AM

While Twitter's short, rapidly shared posts do predispose users to emotion-fuelled responses (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012; Yardi & boyd, 2010) and the type of 'Twitter storms' that are characterised by heated back-and-forth arguments, this conversation touches on more than just a journalist's response to criticism. Bateman's comments about how people need to distinguish between Bateman "the reporter" and Bateman "the person" and how he does not consider news he is not reporting on directly to be the work of "BB the reporter" shows that he is actively negotiating between both roles on Twitter, even shifting between two personas. But, in the case of at least one user (@aadilFulat), the non-partisan sharing of news on any topic (regardless of whether Bateman covered it himself) was also seen as part of Bateman's responsibility as a journalist. Bateman was accused of being prejudiced against Islam by "broadcasting" only negative content related to the religion instead of sharing a broader array of content from around the world which may offer an alternative view. This again points to the potentially confusing and difficult tasks journalists face when posting 'personal' content and views on an account which is associated with their news organisation and profession (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012), but not subject to the same level of editorial control (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). It also highlights the potential for problems arising from the disparity between audiences' expectations of how journalists should use the platform and how journalists themselves think they should be using Twitter.

The later comments about how Bateman chose to quote the tweet and mention the sender rather than replying directly (by starting the tweet with the username and thus limiting its visibility) also raise questions about the best way to respond to this kind of criticism on Twitter. While the decision to make the conversation 'more' public showed Bateman was willing to be transparent about his actions, engage with followers and respond to criticism (Hermida et al., 2012), it also gave the post added visibility that the sender may not have intended. Even though Twitter is by default a public service and, with a simple quote or retweet, the visibility of replies can be amplified, users may still consider their tweets to be semi-private (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Bateman may have considered it to be a public tweet, but at least one of his followers (@_lauraalice) disagreed -- and the conversation that followed had problematic consequences for both the user who questioned Bateman and how the journalist's actions were perceived by others.

By not replying directly, Bateman opened up the discussion to thousands of potential followers, many of whom seem to have supported Bateman's view while resorting to insulting another user's religious beliefs. Thus while answering questions using quotes and

mentions rather than direct replies may help the information to be visible to a greater number of followers, it can also have unintended consequences for the original users, who may not have the same level of support from thousands of followers. When this happens, they can receive additional helpful replies or, in this case, “abusive and insulting” ones, making it a potential additional factor journalists need to consider when engaging with users on Twitter. This could be an important factor when replying to or retweeting users, particularly when it comes to issues that could illicit responses which could be classified as hate speech, be it related to religious beliefs (such as in this case) or other factors such as race or gender.

This example also illustrates how it is possible for emotional tweets to lead to professional complications for the journalists who post them, even in their personal capacity. One of Bateman’s followers suggested that the journalist’s tweets could get him “in the news next,” referencing the directorate for priority crime investigation (the “Hawks”) spokesperson McIntosh Polela, who was dismissed for remarks he made on Twitter. While this didn’t happen in Bateman’s case, this instance illustrates the potential for a discussion to snowball rapidly and the consequences journalists can face in both loss of credibility and (in extreme cases) their jobs, if their opinions or comments on Twitter are seen to bring their organisation into disrepute.

Answers and engagement

While journalists do face challenges when negotiating between their personal views and professional responsibilities when using Twitter, doing so allows them to continue their work to inform the public on another platform (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). Bateman used Twitter extensively for this purpose, dedicating more than a third of his tweets to answering questions sent to him on the platform. By either providing his own answers or including a link for the user to find more information on the topic, Bateman provided resources and information as a service to his followers (Artwick, 2013).

The decreased social distance afforded by Twitter could be contributing to a closer relationship with his audience (Artwick, 2013), who sent Bateman questions related to subjects ranging from his daily activities to requests for more information and an explanation of a previous tweet. In turn, Bateman used Twitter to clarify points and to attempt to stop the spread of false rumours and provide more information to his followers through sharing links. For example, he responded directly to users who were hearing rumours about the death of Nelson Mandela:

Barry Bateman: @carlahendrikz Madiba is in a critical condition. Rely only on trusted sources, not rumor. Thanks for checking.

2013-06-24 12:39 PM

His general structuring of these types of tweets also allowed for increased visibility and for the question and his response to be seen by more than just the individual user and their mutual followers. Instead of simply replying to the user with their username at the beginning of the tweet (and therefore limiting its visibility to those who follow both Bateman and the specific user), he often first included his answer and then quoted the original tweet. He did this in just under half (24) of the 56 answer tweets. The remainder of the answers were classified as replies, in that they began with the specific username and then the direct response without the question in quotes. The fact that such a large portion (28%) of all his tweets were answers suggests that Bateman is embracing Twitter's ability to allow him to engage with audiences, using the platform to spread facts and stop the sharing of misinformation. This is a practice which also seems to be appreciated by followers, who thank him for answering and recognise the time he puts towards replying:

@EmG_R_EmM: And the award for "Patiently Answering the Same Questions Countless Times" once again goes to @barrybateman

2013-07-05 10:47 AM

The decreased social distance afforded by Twitter (Artwick, 2013), coupled with the popularity brought by the Pistorius reports and his work on national radio, also seems to be gaining Bateman an added level of familiarity with audiences. While the tweets which included "@barrybateman" represented a mix of conversations which also queried and criticised Bateman, there were also some which suggested they favoured his tweets over other organisations, complimented his work and expressed their support:

@kerishawmusic: Afraid I've had to unfollow News24.. can't take another minute of the drive!! Will follow @barrybateman for the real news.

2013-07-05 10:45 AM

@tracy_lesa: Am not liking this 'let's have a go at BB day' ! #Bateonians all gather in protest! :D @barrybateman

2013-05-23 08:31 AM

@consciousabucus: As a media student your dedication is a true inspiration, salute @barrybateman

2013-06-09 07:45 AM

Related to this, the majority of tweets which included “@barrybateman” were either mentions or direct replies (those which began with Bateman’s username) – the smallest number of tweets (23.6%) were more straightforward retweets. Mentions, which made up the greatest percentage (41.7%) of tweets including his username, were used for varying purposes, ranging from notifying Bateman of tips and news to attributing him when quoting one of his tweets. Over a third (34.6%) of tweets were one-on-one replies aimed at Bateman, often in a response to a previous tweet or including a query. This suggests that, in addition to sharing his posts with their own followers, users are also joining into conversations with Bateman and targeting tweets at him directly. This goes beyond simply resharing his tweets verbatim, as the large number of replies suggests users are actively responding to his tweets and initiating conversations with him.

A considerable amount of Bateman’s tweets were answers. Nonetheless, he did not post many queries to his followers or specific users, thus casting his persona as a source of information, rather than someone who was curious or interested in the ideas, opinions, or information held by others. While 28% of his tweets were answers to questions, only 3.5% included instances of Bateman asking a follower a question himself. These were generally to clarify a point that a user had tweeted him, not to ask for an explanation from users who were not speaking to him directly. While other journalists have issued open calls to their followers in a bid to crowdsource information from users (Newman, 2009; Trench, 2011), this does not appear to be a method used by Bateman (or at least, a question that cannot be confirmed without interviewing him). While one cannot discount the amount of information that can be gained through simple observation of ambient news streams on Twitter (Hermida, 2010), this does suggest a tendency to use the social network site to share information rather than to actively query its users to gain additional insight.

Reporting, gatewatching and curating

It is not clear whether Bateman is using Twitter as a reporting tool in itself for gathering leads and identifying sources. While the tweets which were observed were only gathered hourly over a two month period and examples of Bateman using Twitter to contact sources may have been missed, only one tweet in the sample clearly showed Bateman using Twitter to follow up on a lead, by trying to get a user’s phone number and move the conversation to a different medium. This could be linked to Jordaan’s (2013) findings which suggest that although South African journalists may use Twitter for keeping track of news and trends, they are hesitant about using the social network site for directly sourcing stories. Even though social network sites have been used by journalists to connect with a large variety of sources and alternative voices (Bruno, 2011; Hermida et al., 2012) this study could not find large scale evidence of such practices in Bateman’s case.

While Bateman does use Twitter as a distribution mechanism for his work on other platforms, his use of live-tweeting for major event coverage also suggests he uses it as a platform for reporting in itself, particularly for major events which are topical or trending

topics in the country (for example, #OscarPistorius and #Madiba). By doing so, he acts as witness to these events and serves the public both by monitoring the events and sharing them with his followers (Artwick, 2013). Despite this, live-tweets accounted for just 15% of all tweets, which suggests Bateman primarily uses his account for other purposes beyond direct reporting.

Bateman frequently shares news from other users by retweeting official accounts and other journalists, thus performing the duties of an aggregator (Artwick, 2013). In fact, the single biggest category of tweets was retweets, and the majority (84%) of hyperlinks shared by Bateman were through retweets – he shared only seven links which were not retweets or which didn't include a quote of a previous tweet and a reference to the original poster. In this way, Bateman amplified the reach of these tweets, showing how the networked nature of Twitter can allow news to disseminate rapidly beyond the original users who posted it (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). The number of retweets also went against the findings of previous studies, which suggest that, on average, retweets feature less in journalists' timelines than the tweets they composed themselves (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

In this way, Bateman can be seen to be adopting the new role of journalists as curators who verify, contextualise and help interpret information for audiences (Hermida et al., 2012). Through sharing both the tweets of others and URLs, as well as answering the queries of his followers, Bateman is fulfilling the role of a gatewatcher who helps make sense of events, and highlights information which is interesting and significant (Jones & Pitcher, 2010). The percentage of tweets which contained links (25%) was much lower than the 40% and 42% averages obtained respectively by Artwick (2013) and Lasorsa et al. (2012). Nonetheless the high number of retweets and answers to questions still suggest that Bateman is acting as an information broker and seeking to inform users on Twitter, perhaps on the platform directly, rather than simply referring them to seek answers elsewhere on the web.

Bateman also demystified his work by including a fair amount of job-talking, describing his activities and sharing stories behind the scenes (such as the updates from the perspectives of the journalists outside the hospital where Mandela was being treated). In this way, he gave his followers (some) insight into the process of making news reports, promoting transparency between journalists and media consumers (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

Conclusion

This study does not claim to focus on a 'typical' South African journalist. Instead, it accounts for the practices during two months of an exceptionally widely followed individual with the backing of a national media organisation who gained global status on Twitter through his coverage of the Pistorius case. The study does offer a foundation for further research by highlighting some insights into how Twitter is being adopted by one of the country's more prominent journalists.

While this study is limited in size and scope, some findings do have implications for further research. Firstly, although content analysis of individual tweets provided relatively concise units of analysis which could be fairly easily coded, there may be some value in studying entire conversations on Twitter as well. Without the context of the larger discussion and sequence of tweets which may have come before a specific post, the meaning of some of the messages was difficult to ascertain without looking up the entire conversation thread. This was also complicated by the fact that Twitter's 140 character limit sometimes results in modified retweets and discussions without all participants and parts of the message included (Barash & Golder, 2010). This makes it difficult to identify the entire original conversation thread and understand where a specific tweet fits into the larger discussions. In order to understand the nature of these exchanges more completely, further research should study full conversation streams as well as individual tweets. In addition to this, future research should also consider including the self-reported experiences of journalists on Twitter through a qualitative element such as interviewing. This could be used to supplement and provide additional insight into how an individual journalist uses Twitter by including his/her own views on tweets and explanations for them, which could not be obtained by simply monitoring the tweets as an outside observer.

As it happened, the data collection period for this study coincided with Nelson Mandela's hospitalisation (a major news event in the country for weeks and one which Bateman covered), which may have influenced the volume and nature of tweets posted. In total, 5 of the 19 live-tweets in the sample included the hashtag #madiba (Mandela's clan name), while Bateman also retweeted 6 posts including #madiba or #nelsonmandela, and replied to a number of questions from followers asking for the latest update on Mandela's health. This may also have had an impact on the number of tweets including "@barrybateman" – #madiba was included in 7% of those tweets, as users asked him questions about whether he was still outside the hospital, the international media crews stationed there and high-profile visitors. As such, this sample may not represent a typical two months but rather a period which may have seen more live-tweets and answers than usual as Bateman documented events outside the hospital and tried to clear up a number of rumours that Mandela had passed away. In future, other researchers should consider undertaking a longer data capture period in order to help mitigate the impact of a major news event such as this on the frequency of certain types of tweets. A longer time frame would also result in more tweets captured for analysis, which would allow for the formulation of an overarching hypothesis and more advanced statistical analysis and comparison with the findings of larger studies such as the research by Lasorsa et al. (2012) to see how similar South African journalists' tweets are to those of their counterparts in the United States. This was not possible in the case of this study given the scope and time-frame of this minor dissertation.

Twitter is a social network site which privileges conversation and communication in a way that goes against the traditional hierarchical structures of big media (Hermida et al., 2012). It allows for a different kind of journalism through real time reporting and rapid distribution

of information through a network. But it may still be some time before journalists take full advantage of its possibilities, as users such as Bateman may embrace some aspects of the social network site but not others. In this case, in answer to the primary research question, this study found that Bateman did transfer existing traditions and practices to a new platform. While Bateman did use Twitter extensively to communicate with users and share their tweets, as evidenced by the high number of ‘answer’ tweets and retweets, he exhibited the tendency of journalists to rely on sources which already hold positions of authority in a space with an accelerated news cycle (Hermida et al., 2012). Bateman may use Twitter as a tool to share information and curate a stream of tweets designed to highlight relevant news and commentary, but many of the resources and messages he shared were posted by users or organisations which already hold a high level of influence on Twitter or in the broader South African society. He rarely shared news-related posts from alternative sources or users on the ground, instead amplifying the reach of the mainstream media and other figures and groups who hold positions of power. By doing this, he also furthered the tendency of a relatively small number of powerful users to attract the most attention on Twitter (Barash & Golder, 2010), by helping them to air their views to an even larger potential audience.

However, Bateman did not simply use Twitter as a one-way broadcast mechanism – he also dedicated a substantial portion of his tweets to replying to users and engaging in conversations with them. He gave them insight into his daily work and used Twitter to inform and educate, both on a one-on-one basis and through more generally visible tweets. They, in turn, mentioned him in their conversations and engaged with him directly through replies more frequently than they simply retweeted his posts. The conversation around “@barrybateman” (the second research question) was thus characterised by high levels of conversation enabled through mentions, replies and retweets.

But while Bateman often shared resources with his followers, there was little evidence that he used Twitter to gather information himself, with only one case of him attempting to contact a source and a low percentage of his tweets being questions to others. This suggests that while he is adopting the social network site’s ability to communicate with audiences and report on and share news, he has not embraced ideas around crowd-sourcing, identifying alternative voices or highlighting citizen reports in the same way. While his live-tweets, job talking and answers to questions can be seen as a bid to be transparent and bear witness to events (Artwick, 2013; Lasorsa et al., 2012), he also shared a number of tweets which clash with the idea of a journalist as an unbiased observer who provides balanced and fair commentary. This highlights the difficulties that can be faced when navigating between the roles of “the person” and “the reporter”.

This research supports Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira’s (2012) assertion that Twitter may be creating a form of hybrid journalism, as traditional practices were both modified and challenged by Bateman. While he does continue to fulfil his role as a broker and curator of

information, some of Bateman's tweets show he is moving beyond the realm of observation and measured critique to share his own views, and experiencing some level of difficulty in separating the two personas. On a broader scale, his preference for a limited pool of sources and the voices of a certain group in society does not suggest fundamental hierarchical structures are being challenged on this new medium. This leads the researcher to conclude that while some practices are being altered, on the whole, Bateman's use of Twitter does suggest the social network site is a platform for business as usual, albeit in a new location.

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Appendix A: NodeXL data capture method

This method is an adaptation of the process described by Smith (2010) on how to automate the capture of network data. While he has posted more detailed instructions, the general steps taken are outlined below:

1. After installing the NodeXL software, the SampleConfigurationFile.xml was located in the installation files and two duplicates made which were saved in another folder. One was renamed BatemanList.xml and the other BatemanSearch.xml
2. The researcher created a dedicated list on her personal Twitter account and added Bateman's official account to it. One of the duplicated files was designated for capturing the most recent tweet from this list (which only included Bateman's tweets), while the other was concerned with capturing tweets mentioning Bateman.
3. The BatemanList.xml file was edited so that the Network Type was set to 'TwitterList', and the details under the heading Twitter List Network Configuration stated the location of the list (the researcher's username and the list title) and that 'LatestStatus' (the most recent tweet) was designated as the type of data to capture. An output folder of where to save the document once it was captured was also specified.
4. The BatemanSearch.xml was edited so that the Network Type was set to 'TwitterSearch', and the details under the heading Twitter Search Network Configuration stated the search term ("@barrybateman") and that 'LatestStatus', 'RepliesToEdges' (replies to users) and 'MentionsEdges' (mentions of users) were as designated as the type of data to capture. The maximum number of users to capture at any time was set to 100. An output folder of where to save the document once it was captured was also specified.
5. Once this was done, the process was automated using an application called Windows Task Scheduler. In the application, a new folder called 'NodeXL data' was created, and a set of tasks created. The first group involved the Twitter list, and the second the search query.
6. For the Twitter list data, tasks were created which were triggered by a specific time (09H00, 10H00, 11H00, 12H00, 13H00, 14H00, 15H00, 16H00, 17H00) every day. Under the 'actions' menu, the scheduler was instructed to start a program – specifically, to run the BatemanList.xml file. This task was then saved and enabled.
7. For the Twitter search data, a task was created which was triggered at 12H00 daily. Under the 'actions' menu, the scheduler was instructed to start a program – the BatemanSearch.xml file. This task was then saved and activated.

Appendix B: Email correspondence

From: Lauren Granger

Date: Mon, Jun 10, 2013 at 2:01 PM

Subject: Journalists on Twitter: research project

To: Barry Bateman

Dear Barry

I'm currently finishing off my masters at UCT, and my dissertation focuses on how South African journalists are adapting traditional practices when using Twitter. I would like to use your account as a case study, and analyse your tweets and some of the public responses you get from followers as part of my research. Would this be okay with you?

If you have a chance in a few weeks, could we also possibly arrange some time for a short interview (either on the phone / Skype / email) about your experiences using Twitter? It would really help to add an extra level to the research if I could get your commentary on some of the conclusions I draw from the tweets as an outsider. This would only be towards the end of July, after I've completed the initial research.

--

Lauren Granger

Email: misslcgranger@gmail.com / grnlau011@myuct.ac.za

Cell: 084 585 1223

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN This e-mail is subject to the UCT ICT policies and e-mail disclaimer published on our website at <http://www.uct.ac.za/about/policies/emaildisclaimer/> or obtainable from +27 21 650 9111. This e-mail is intended only for the person(s) to whom it is addressed. If the e-mail has reached you in error, please notify the author. If you are not the intended recipient of the e-mail you may not use, disclose, copy, redirect or print the content. If this e-mail is not related to the business of UCT it is sent by the sender in the sender's individual capacity.

On 05 Aug 2013, at 9:31 AM, Lauren Granger <GRNLAU011@myuct.ac.za> wrote:

Dear Barry

I just wanted to follow up and find out if you received my mail about using your tweets for my Masters research project?

Would it be possible to organise a short interview with you sometime this week or next (either over email / the phone / Skype) to discuss how you use Twitter as part of your work for EWN?

Thank you

--

Lauren Granger

MA (Media Theory and Practice) student, University of Cape Town

Email: misslcgranger@gmail.com / grnlau011@myuct.ac.za

Cell: 084 585 1223

From: Barry Bateman

Sent: 05 August 2013 11:20 AM

To: Lauren Granger

Subject: Re: Journalists on Twitter: research project

Dear Lauren,

Sorry I missed this mail. Of course you can use my tweets, but you certainly don't need my permission - they're public. :)

Email works best because I'll get around to answering the questions when I get a gap.

Regards,

Barry Bateman

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On 12 Aug 2013, at 12:00 PM, Lauren Granger <GRNLAU011@myuct.ac.za> wrote:

Dear Barry

Sorry for the delayed reply – and thank you for agreeing to help out with this!

Just some background on the research: basically, I'm interested in how journalists are using Twitter to post news and their views and engage with audiences on the platform. As part of my project, I've been looking at both the tweets you've posted and the tweets others have posted which mention you, to try to get an idea of what's being said and shared. I'm particularly focusing on traditional journalistic values around objectivity, gatekeeping and transparency and how they play out in the Twittersphere. I have posted a short proposal for the study on my research blog if you want to see more details (<http://laurenresearchblog.wordpress.com/2013/05/05/twitter-journalism-and-a-case-study/>).

The questions I wanted to ask you are as follows:

1. 1. How do you view Twitter as a journalist?
2. 2. Do you ever gather story ideas from Twitter, or do you prefer other sources?
3. Many journalists state in their Twitter bios that their views do not represent their organisation or that retweets don't imply endorsement. Why did you opt to rather include a more descriptive bio?
4. What is EWN's policy regarding Twitter? Do they actively encourage their staff to share links to EWN content?
5. A large chunk of your tweets are retweets, rather than those you've composed yourself. Why do you opt to rather retweet posts and how do you decide whose tweets to share?
6. When you reply to users, you seem to vary between posting a straight reply (just mentioning their username and then posting your answer) and quoting part of their original tweet. But starting with a username limits the visibility of the tweet to just your mutual followers. How do you decide which type of response to use?
7. With so many followers, how do you manage the volume of mentions you receive? How do you decide which tweets to reply to?
8. Would you consider using Twitter for identifying and contacting potential sources on a larger scale? Why / why not?
9. For advertising and other reasons, many organisations opt to rather host a liveblog or full summary on their website for an event rather than live-tweeting it. But you use your account (and @ewnreporter) for live-tweeting frequently. Why did you decide to go this route?
10. Has it been difficult to make the distinction between your personal and professional roles on Twitter considering you're using a technically personal account for work purposes? How do you navigate the issues around this?

11. If Twitter shut down tomorrow, what impact would it ultimately have on your day-to-day work? Do you think you would be better or worse off without it?

I hope that's not too much to answer... Thanks again

Lauren Granger

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